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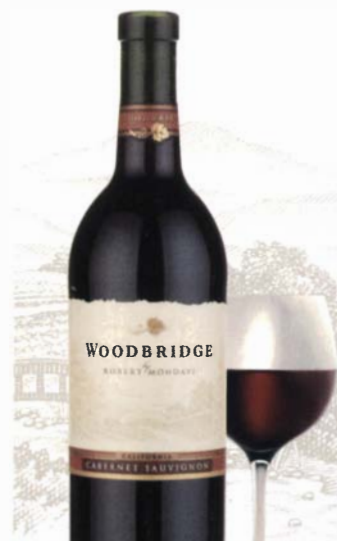
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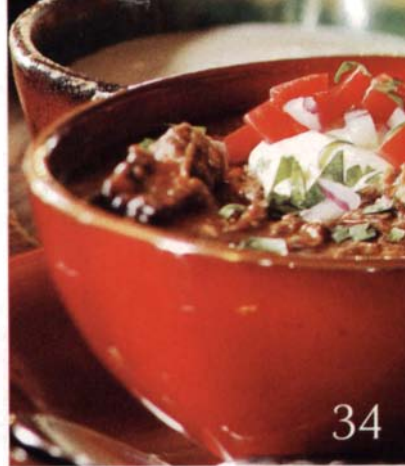
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# fine Cooking

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2005 ISSUE 70



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## RECIPE FOLDOUT

### 82C Quick & Delicious



*Chicken with Mustard-Fennel Crust*

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*Roasted Red Potato Slices with  
Lemons & Olives, p. 53*

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# What's for dinner?

This issue of *Fine Cooking* is packed with ideas to answer that question. Don't miss the Dinner with Friends menu of Texas chili and cornbread on p. 34, and be sure to try the roast chicken dinner below. Any of the duos at right would make a great weeknight supper—just be sure to check the yield on each recipe, as you may need to double or halve it to suit your needs. —the editors

## Comforting Roast Chicken Dinner

Two make-ahead steps mean this menu could come together at the end of a busy day. Salt the chicken and make the pudding cakes a day or two in advance. Then while the chicken cooks, make the easy smashed potatoes. The green beans could even go in the oven with the chicken.

Roast Chicken with  
Lemon Artichoke Sauce, p. 42

Smashed Red Potatoes with  
Basil & Parmesan, p. 51

Garlic-Roasted Green Beans with  
Hazelnuts & Shallots, p. 47

Butter-Rum Pudding Cakes, p. 65

**To drink:**  
A dry, crisp Italian white wine like Soave

## Dynamic duos

We've got so many great pairings in this issue that we decided to highlight them here with drink choices. The Spicy Pepitas on p. 38 or the Candied Walnuts on p. 54 would make easy starters, and the Lemon Pudding Cakes on p. 62 would be a refreshing finale for any of these meals.

Seared Flank Steak with  
Shallot-Mustard Sauce, p. 82c  
Pan-Fried Red Potatoes  
with Pancetta & Rosemary, p. 52

**To drink:**  
A medium-bodied Cabernet-based blend

Roasted Carrot Soup, p. 26  
Duck Breast & Orange Salad, p. 82c

**To drink:**  
Chenin Blanc or an off-dry Riesling

Pork Chops with Maple-Ginger Pan Sauce, p. 49  
Red Potatoes Roasted with Onions, Thyme &  
Sherry Vinegar, p. 53

**To drink:**  
Wheat beer or amber ale

Sautéed Lamb Chops with  
Herbes de Provence, p. 82c  
Roasted Red Potato Slices with  
Lemon & Olives, p. 53

**To drink:**  
A medium-bodied Syrah

Chicken with Mustard-Fennel Crust, p. 82c  
Roasted Carrots & Parsnips with  
Shallot-Herb Butter, p. 46

**To drink:**  
A light- to medium-bodied Pinot Noir

Tortellini in Broth with Roasted Vegetables, p. 10  
Spinach & Basil Salad, p. 55  
or Romaine Salad with Caesar Dressing, p. 67

**To drink:**  
For a fun textural contrast, try Prosecco,  
the Italian sparkler

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from the editor

# Why we love roasting

This issue of *Fine Cooking* is packed with some of our all-time favorite foods—and it's no coincidence that many of them are roasted (chicken, vegetables, and potatoes, to name a few). Here are our top ten reasons for loving this easy cooking method that produces such delicious results.

- 10. Brussels sprouts.** Not only will people eat roasted Brussels sprouts, but they'll also say, "These are delicious—what are they?" (See p. 47.)
- 9. No fancy equipment required.** With a heavy-duty baking sheet or roasting pan, salt, and olive oil, you're off and running. A bonus: only one pan to clean.
- 8. Hands-free cooking.** A little prep, pop it in the oven, and you're free to sauté, make a salad, or have a glass of wine.
- 7. It's forgiving.** No *à la minute* cooking here. A little extra time in the oven just means more browning and more flavor.
- 6. Cook at your own pace.** Turn up the oven to quick-roast or turn it down to slow-roast.
- 5. Everyone wants seconds.** It's amazing how you can spend hours preparing something fancy, but it's the simple roasted potatoes that everyone loves most. (See p. 51.)
- 4. Delicious "nubbins."** The cook gets first dibs on all those crisp, crusty, or caramelized bits that stick to the pan or "accidentally" fall off the roast.
- 3. Amazing flavor and texture.** What's crisp outside, tender inside, and sweet and salty all over? Just about anything roasted.
- 2. Your kitchen smells great...and feels warm.**
- 1. Roast chicken.** See p. 40.

Remember, roasting doesn't just do its magic on finished dishes—it transforms ingredients, too. Use it as your secret weapon against blah produce and lackluster recipes. Transform an ordinary salad or pasta (see the recipe at right) or just about any kind of soup or stew by roasting the main ingredients first.

—Susie Middleton, editor



## Tortellini in Broth with Roasted Vegetables

Serves two.

This is a great way to use up extra winter vegetables. I like a mix of carrots, parsnips, sweet potatoes, and cauliflower. I don't bother to peel most of these, as the skins are perfectly tender when roasted.

- 3 cups ¾-inch-diced winter vegetables (carrots, parsnips, turnips, cauliflower, broccoflower, winter squash, sweet potatoes)**
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 6 ounces frozen small cheese tortellini**
- 1 small shallot, sliced into rings**
- Pinch red chile flakes**
- 1½ cups homemade or low-salt chicken broth**
- ¼ cup (about ½ ounce) freshly and finely grated Parmigiano Reggiano**
- 2 teaspoons coarsely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**
- ½ small lemon, cut into two wedges**

Heat the oven to 450°F. Put a large pot of water on to boil. In a 9x13-inch Pyrex baking dish, toss the 3 cups vegetables with 2 tablespoons of the oil and ¼ teaspoon salt and spread in one layer. Roast until the vegetables are well browned and shrunken, 28 to 30 minutes, stirring occasionally with a flat metal spatula.

After the vegetables have roasted for about 15 minutes, add 2 teaspoons salt and the tortellini to the boiling water; cook the pasta until tender. Save some of the water to pour into two large shallow soup bowls to warm them. Drain the tortellini in a colander. In a small saucepan, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil over medium heat. Add the shallots; sauté until softened and browned, about 2½ minutes. Stir in the chile flakes and add the chicken broth. Bring to a simmer, cover, and simmer for 4 to 5 minutes. Turn off the heat and keep covered. Pour the water out of the soup bowls. Divide the tortellini between the warmed bowls. Spoon the roasted vegetables over the pasta. Pour the broth over the vegetables and garnish with the Parmigiano and parsley. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve with a lemon wedge.

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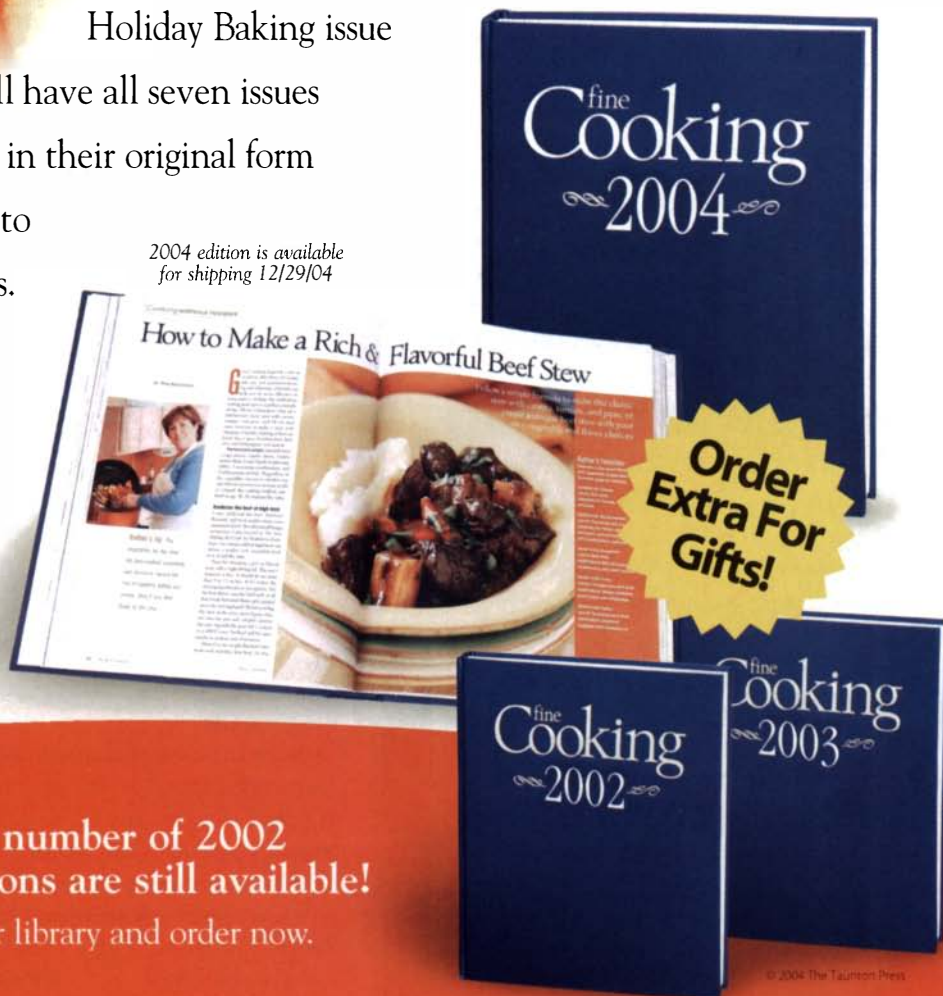
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# from our readers

## Nice touch, that ginger

I have to compliment the Ginger Apple Crumb Pie recipe in *Fine Cooking* #67. I made this pie for a dinner party recently. My husband said it was the best apple pie he has ever had, and my guests raved about it! I have made a lot of apple pies in my day, but the ginger really was a nice touch. Thank you.

—Natasha Stunda,  
Mississauga, Ontario

## Worth the wait

Oh, wow! I'm an avid baker and a part-time professional baker. For the past few years, I've waited with bated breath for *Fine Cooking's* annual Holiday Baking issue. I've just visited the newsstand and you have come through with the most incredible magazine, packed full of tips, new ingredients and resources, not to mention some of the most beautiful recipes. Thank you for this treat—it is greatly appreciated and one of the best gifts I get for the holidays!

—Bonnie Silver, via email

## Grow your own lime

I'm responding to a reader's query about kaffir (wild) lime leaves, and Su-Mei Yu's response (*Fine Cooking* #67, p. 24). I agree that dried lime leaves aren't worth buying—but it is

possible to grow your own wild lime tree indoors, or outdoors in a moderate climates. They're wonderful indoor plants. I once had one grow almost five feet tall in a northern bay window.

A good mail-order source for wild lime, Meyer lemon, and calamansi (calamondin orange) plants is Acorn Springs Farm in Texas (acornsprings.com), which provides very healthy specimens. You can also inquire at Asian markets; many Thai stores grow and sell seedlings of wild lime.

By the way, I love Su-Mei Yu's contributions to *Fine Cooking*—her recipe for Grilled Thai Chicken in *Fine Cooking* #58 is the best and is even good in the middle of the winter in the oven.

—Sandra Solis, via email

**Editors' note:** You will see fewer and fewer references to “kaffir” lime leaves, as the term is derogatory in Arabic and some southern African languages. Many recipes now refer to wild lime leaves or *mah krud* (its Thai name).

## How many speeds does a stand mixer need?

In our stand mixer review in *Fine Cooking* #68, we erroneously stated that three of the machines have fewer speeds than they actually do. The KitchenAid Professional has six marked speeds, but will also click into four more in-between speeds if prodded. The Hamilton Beach Electric operates the same way, offering six marked (even-numbered) speeds, but six more incremental clicks. The Viking Professional has eight marked speeds, which the article noted, and also gradually accelerates between those speeds.

All of this raises the question: how many speeds are really necessary? We find that it's useful to have at least five speeds—low, medium-low, medium, medium-high, and high—but how they're named or numbered doesn't matter as long as they truly cover a wide range.

—the editors

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**Fine Cooking:** (ISSN: 1072-5121) is published bimonthly, with a special seventh issue in the winter, by The Taunton Press, Inc., Newtown, CT 06470-5506. Telephone 203-426-8171. Periodicals postage paid at Newtown, CT 06470 and at additional mailing offices. GST paid registration #123210981.

**Subscription Rates:** U.S. and Canada, \$29.95 for one year, \$49.95 for two years, \$69.95 for three years (GST included, payable in U.S. funds). Outside the U.S./Canada: \$36 for one year, \$62 for two years, \$88 for three years (payable in U.S. funds). Single copy, \$5.95. Single copy outside the U.S., \$6.95.

**Postmaster:** Send address changes to *Fine Cooking*, The Taunton Press, Inc., 63 South Main St., P.O. Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506.

**Canada Post:** Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to *Fine Cooking*, c/o Worldwide Mailers, Inc., 2744 Edna St., Windsor, ON N8Y 1V2

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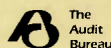
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READER SERVICE NO. 67



Paula Disbrowe & David Norman

Though they're recent Texas transplants by way of Manhattan, **Paula Disbrowe** and **David Norman** have strong opinions about Texas chili ("A Texas Chili & Cornbread Menu," p. 34), and they've created an authentic version that's perfect for a chilly winter night with friends. Paula is a former food editor and a food writer who has cooked in France and Italy; her cookbook, *Cowgirl Cuisine*, will be published next spring. David was the head bread baker at Bouley Bakery and Danube in Manhattan, and has been an instructor at the French Culinary Institute and the San Francisco Baking Institute.



Floyd Cardoz



Julianna Grimes Bottcher



Elizabeth Karmel

**Pam Anderson** ("Roast Chicken," p. 40), a contributing editor for *Fine Cooking*, roasted scores of chickens before settling on the technique she shares in this issue. She's the author of *The Perfect Recipe*, *How to Cook without a Book*, and *CookSmart*. Her new book, *How to Share a Meal*, will be published this September. Pam teaches cooking classes across the country and is the food columnist for *USA Weekend* magazine.

While growing up on her family farm in Texas, **Julianna Grimes Bottcher** ("Roasted Vegetable Combinations," p. 44) would harvest vegetables from the garden. "From field to table was just a short dusty ride for us," she says. Today, Julianna is a freelance

food writer and recipe developer who lives in Birmingham, Alabama. In 2004, she started her own food consulting business, Flavor Matters, Inc.

**Eva Katz** ("Red Potatoes Five Ways," p. 51) is a frequent contributor to *Fine Cooking*. She has worked as a chef, caterer, teacher, recipe developer and tester, food stylist, and food writer. Eva is on the advisory board of the Cambridge School of Culinary Arts.

**Sarah Jay** ("Maple Syrup," p. 54) developed a healthy addiction to maple syrup years ago. She has been known to bring her own Grade B syrup to breakfast diners, and she usually packs some on overseas trips (maple syrup makes a great gift for foreigners). A former daily newspaper reporter, Sarah is the managing editor of *Fine Cooking*.

Raised on barbecue in North Carolina, **Elizabeth Karmel** ("Spinach Salad," p. 54) is widely known as one of America's top grilling experts. Her cookbook *Taming the Flame: Secrets to Hot and Quick Grilling and Low and Slow Barbecue* will be out in April.

**Floyd Cardoz** ("Spice Up Your Cooking," p. 56) is the executive chef of Tabla restaurant in New York City, which serves modern American cuisine infused with the sensual flavors and spices of Floyd's native India.

**Nicole Rees** ("Pudding Cakes," p. 62) has been developing cake recipes since the age of nine. Nicole co-wrote the revised edition of *Understanding Baking*, a book on the science and technique of baking, as well as its companion recipe book, *The Baker's Manual*.



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## What is ricotta salata and how do I use it? Is it similar to feta?

—Isabel Reade, Des Moines, Iowa

**A** Laura Werlin responds: Ricotta salata cheese is originally from Sicily, although it's made in other regions in Italy too. Like regular ricotta, ricotta salata is made from whey rather than curds. Unlike ricotta, however, ricotta salata is pressed and aged for at least three months, resulting in a much drier cheese. It has a firm texture and salty flavor (*salata* means salted), making it ideal for grating. It's wonderful grated over a beet salad or sprinkled on top of a risotto or tomato-based pasta.

Some people think that ricotta salata is a good substitute for feta, and that's probably because both cheeses are traditionally made with sheep's milk, and both cheeses are salty. But in fact, the two are quite different from one another. The key difference is that feta is aged in brine, giving it a much wetter, more crumbly texture than ricotta salata.

*Laura Werlin is the author of Great Grilled Cheese: 50 Innovative Recipes for Stovetop, Grill, and Sandwich Maker.*

to become the base for flavor additions like mustard, garlic, vegetables, fresh herbs, and seasonings.

Once you've used a neutral oil to make the mayonnaise, you can also flavor it with very small amounts of more assertive oils like extra-virgin olive oil, sesame oil, and many nut oils. But steer clear of peanut oil, which is too heavy.

*Arlene Jacobs is a freelance food writer and a chef-instructor at the French Culinary Institute in New York City.*

## Why do I need to cut steam vents into a pie crust?

—Mae Montgomery, via email

**A** Carole Walter responds: Cutting steam vents in the top crust of a pie allows for the release of excess moisture while the pie bakes. The vents help the juices to evaporate, preventing a soggy bottom crust. Venting also keeps the top crust from cracking by allowing air that builds up under the crust to escape.

You can make steam vents by cutting six to eight slashes in the top of the pastry using the blade of a knife or a dough scraper. Pricking the pastry twelve to fifteen times with the prongs of a fork is another venting method that works well. Or, for a more ornamental look, you can cut several holes in the dough with a tiny cookie cutter or canapé cutter.

It's natural for steam vents to close somewhat during baking. If they close completely, make them a little larger next time.

*Carole Walter is a pastry teacher and the author of several cookbooks, including Great Pies & Tarts. ♦*

Have a question of general interest about cooking? Send it to Q&A, Fine Cooking, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506, or by email to [fc@taunton.com](mailto:fc@taunton.com), and we'll find a cooking professional with the answer.

## I feel like I can never pound my boneless chicken breasts into the thin, even cutlets I see in magazines. What's the trick?

—Edward Jewell, Akron, Ohio

**A** Pam Anderson responds: Start by removing the tenderloin if it's still attached. (That's the little strip of meat often dangling from the back of each chicken breast.) If you have a small chicken breast, set it skinned side down—the more pliable cut side of the breast is more pounder-friendly—on a large sheet of plastic wrap and cover it with a second sheet of plastic wrap. Using a pounder, lightly pound the chicken breast to the desired even thickness. For larger chicken breasts, cut them in half horizontally, put the halves between the two sheets of plastic wrap and pound as described above. When they're cut in half this way, though, you'll find the chicken breasts need very little, if any, pounding.

My favorite pounder is a disk-style one with a handle in the middle. For quick weeknight cooking, however, I've found that my fist works pretty well, too. And although their pounding surfaces aren't flat, a can or rolling pin can also be used to even out a cutlet. Whatever you use, make sure that it's relatively lightweight with a smooth surface. Unlike tough red meat, which can stand sharp, heavy blows, chicken breasts are delicate and need only gentle coaxing to thin out.

*Pam Anderson, a Fine Cooking contributing editor, has written several cookbooks, including CookSmart.*

## What's the best oil for making mayonnaise?

—Beth Akin, via email

**A** Arlene Jacobs responds: To make this classic sauce, it's best to use a light, neutral vegetable oil like canola, corn, or grapeseed. That way, the mayonnaise has a neutral enough flavor

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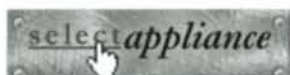
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# Cabernet Sauvignon

BY TIM GAISER

Delicious ones come from all over the world—not just California

**C**abernet Sauvignon is often called the king of red wines, and it's easy to see why. No other red grape produces so many world-class wines in so many places around the globe. What's more, Cabernet is capable of long-term aging, which only confirms its grand status. Though usually not as soft and immediately appealing as its cousin Merlot, Cabernet's impressive concentration, power, and easily recognizable set of flavors make it one of the most popular of all red wines.

**A brief world tour of Cabernet**  
Such is the reputation of the grape that any time winemakers want to

make "serious wine," they plant Cabernet. Vintners from Bulgaria to Australia have been enticed by Cabernet's heady mix of aromas and flavors. Fortunately, Cab does well in a wide range of climates and soil types. But the grape thrives in moderate to warm climates with long growing seasons and in rocky, well-drained soils.

## Bordeaux

Any list of great Cabernet-based wines starts here. In Bordeaux, the Cabernet grape is blended with Merlot, Cabernet Franc, Malbec, and Petit Verdot to produce some of the most complex and long-

## Cabernet styles & flavors

### Lighter Cabernets

- ❖ Cranberry
- ❖ Red raspberry
- ❖ Prominent herbal/vegetal notes
- ❖ Medium oak
- ❖ Medium tannins
- ❖ Medium to high acidity

- ❖ Medium to rich oak
- ❖ Medium to high tannins
- ❖ Medium acidity

### Fuller-bodied Cabernets

- ❖ Dense, concentrated black fruits
- ❖ Herbal notes
- ❖ High oak
- ❖ High tannins
- ❖ Medium acidity

### Medium-weight Cabernets

- ❖ Red and black fruits
- ❖ Herbal notes

# Something missing in the kitchen? Find it at [finecooking.com](http://finecooking.com).

The screenshot shows the website for The Taunton Press, featuring a navigation bar with links like 'TAUNTON HOME', 'BOOKS & VIDEOS', 'FINE WOODWORKING', 'FINE HOMEBUILDING', 'FINE COOKING', 'FINE GARDENING', 'INSPIRED HOUSE', 'THREADS', and 'CUSTOMER SERVICE'. The main heading is 'fine Cooking shoppingguide' with a 'GO TO FINECOOKING.COM' button. A sidebar on the left lists categories under 'MARKETPLACE': Appliances, Bakeware, Cookware Books, Cutlery, Gifts, Gourmet Foods, Ingredients, Kitchen Design & Tableware, Kitchen Tools & Utensils, Schools, Travel & Organizations, and Wine, Beverages & Accessories. The main content area has the title 'Great products for great cooks' and a paragraph: 'Looking for a product you saw advertised in *Fine Cooking* magazine? They're all here. Find quick product information or browse around the organized list of products.' To the right is a photograph of various kitchen items including a grater, bottles of oil, a whisk, a bowl, and peppers.

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lived red wines made anywhere. Châteaux such as Latour, Pichon-Lalande, and Leoville-Las-Cases have made great wines for well over a century, long ago establishing benchmarks for age-worthy, complex Cabernets. Stylistically, these wines tend to be earthier and more herbal than their Australian or California cousins, with more emphasis on richly earthy and herbal notes.

### California

Cabernet put California on the world's wine map in the 1970s. Cab easily adapted to the state's Mediterranean climate, and the grape's bold, ripe flavors were perfectly suited to legions of young winemakers eager to make their mark on the world's wine scene. Although Merlot has replaced Cabernet as the most popular California red wine in the last decade, Cabernet still accounts for a large share of sales. Stylistically, California Cabs offer ripe, concentrated black fruits, herbal-spice notes, and plenty of new oak.

## Pairing Cabernet with food

### Lighter Cabernets

- ❖ Oven-roasted chicken
- ❖ Pastas with simple meat-based red sauces
- ❖ Meatloaf
- ❖ Grilled eggplant
- ❖ Pizza

### Medium- and full-bodied Cabernets

- ❖ Red meats, including beef and lamb
- ❖ Roasted or grilled pork loin
- ❖ Duck

### Washington State

The arid high desert plateau of Eastern Washington has proven to be an excellent place to cultivate Cabernet. Growers craft fine Cabernets and Bordeaux blends, some of which are remarkably complex. Stylistically, these Cabs combine bright black fruits, tart acidity, and firm tannins, which make Washington State Cabernet and Cab blends ideal candidates for aging.

### Australia

The easy-drinking, fruit-forward Australian style of winemaking lends itself nicely to Cabernet. But Australians are serious about their Cabernet, too. Look no further than wines from the famed Coonawarra region in South Australia for some of the world's best Cabernet. Stylistically, Aussie Cabs are bold, robust, and intensely fruity wines with a wallop of oak and balancing tannin. The Aussies also blend the regal grape with the spicier, fruitier Shiraz, with results that are simply delicious.

### Chile

Chile's reputation as a wine-producing country has been built around inexpensive single-variety bottlings, and none has fared better than Cabernet. With considerable foreign investment, Chile has been making some outstanding Cabernets and Bordeaux-style blends in the last five years. Fine Chilean Cabernet offers a combination of supple New World fruit with a touch of Old World earthiness, all with impeccable balance.

There's also there's a great deal of promise in years to come for Cabs from South Africa, Long Island, and Bulgaria.

## Call me a Cab

Here's a list to get you started on some delicious Cabernet Sauvignons. Wines are listed in ascending order of price; retail prices are approximate.

### Lighter

- 2002 Hacienda Araucano Cabernet Sauvignon, Chile; \$9
- 2001 Gallo of Sonoma Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma; \$13
- 2001 Boschendal Cabernet Sauvignon, South Africa; \$15

### Medium

- 2001 Dallas Conte Cabernet Sauvignon, Chile; \$10
- 2002 Wynns Coonawarra Cabernet Sauvignon, South Australia; \$14
- 2002 J. Lohr Seven Oaks Cabernet Sauvignon, Paso Robles, California; \$15
- 2000 Fourcas Hosten, Listrac, Bordeaux; \$17
- 2001 Sebastiani, Sonoma County Cabernet Sauvignon; \$17

### Full

- 2002 Chateau St. Jean Cabernet Sauvignon, Sonoma County; \$15
- 2001 Andrew Rich Cabernet Sauvignon, Columbia Valley, Washington; \$24
- 1999 Block Collection Cabernet Sauvignon, Geyser Peak, Vallerga Vineyard, Napa; \$36
- 2001 Chappellet "Signature" Cabernet Sauvignon, Napa Valley; \$42
- 1998 Domaine de Chevalier Rouge, Pessac-Leognan, Bordeaux; \$45
- 2000 Carruades de Lafite, Pauillac, Bordeaux; \$60

*Tim Gaiser, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is a master sommelier. ♦*

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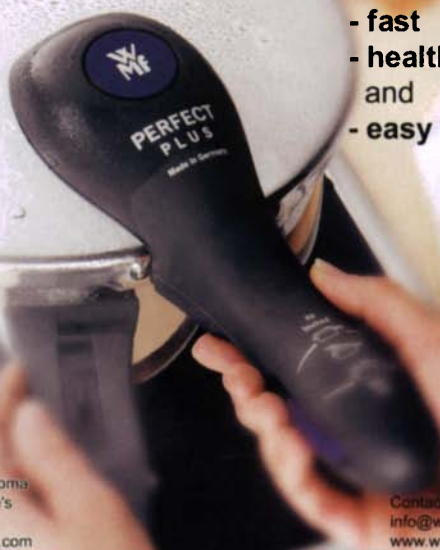
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We love what sea salt brings to this creamy butter: not just saltiness, but a pleasant crunch. The butter itself is smooth and rich, with a subtle tanginess. You can use it any way you'd use regular salted butter, but we like it the most straightforward way, spread on a piece of crusty French bread. *Vermont Butter & Cheese Butter with Sea Salt*, \$6.99 for 6 ounces at *Whole Foods* markets and *Igourmet.com* (877-446-8763)

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BY REBECCA FREEDMAN

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## Pepper alternatives

You might think all black pepper is alike, but we've just tried two intriguing peppers that taste more than just, well, peppery. Australian mountain pepper has a distinctive fruitiness with a hint of citrus, while Balinese long peppers have a decidedly complex taste that reminds us of a pine forest. Try crushing these peppers in a mortar and pestle and adding them to spice rubs for steak, pork chops, or grilled tuna. *Australian Mountain Pepper*, \$13 for 45 grams, and *Balinese Long Peppers*, \$13 for 4½ ounces, at *Zingermans.com* (888-636-8162).



## A single malt to savor

I've always loved the aroma, the craft, and the very idea of single-malt Scotch whiskey, but the wine drinker in me has always found it way too potent. I may become a convert, however, after tasting Ardbeg, a ten-year-old Islay single malt. It's delicate and leathery, and makes for wonderful after-dinner sipping, just like a fine brandy. Available at good spirits shops nationwide; about \$40 a bottle (the stuff keeps for a long time, and a wee dram is all you'll need).

—Amy Albert, senior editor





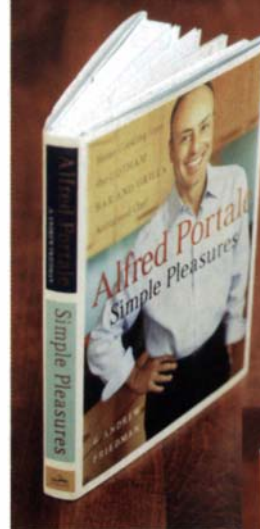
## A magnetic trivet

When carrying a hot pot to the table, we sometimes feel like we need three hands—two for the pot and one for a trivet. But that third hand isn't needed with this Kuhn Rikon trivet—it has magnetic feet that adhere to Dutch ovens and steel pots, so they carry the trivet along for you. *Kuhn Rikon Magnetic Trivet*, \$24 at [Williams-sonoma.com](http://Williams-sonoma.com).



## Find a great olive oil—in your grocery store

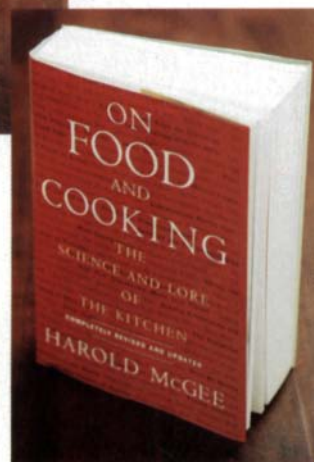
Good news: One of the most flavorful and well-balanced olive oils we've tasted lately isn't a mail-order item and it doesn't have a ghastly price tag. Monini Original olive oil, made from 100-percent Italian olives, is distinctly fruity, with none of the off flavors that other oils in its price range sometimes have. It's a perfect everyday oil to keep on the counter for vinaigrettes and sautés. *About \$11.39 for 1 liter (33.8 ounces) at grocery stores nationwide.*



## Books for cooks

*Alfred Portale Simple Pleasures: Home Cooking from the Gotham Bar and Grill's Acclaimed Chef* (William Morrow, \$34.95). In

their third collaboration, Alfred Portale and co-author Andrew Friedman successfully translate restaurant-kitchen magic into 125 do-able, delicious recipes—proving it's possible to create wow-worthy flavors from ordinary supermarket ingredients (and without dirtying every pot and pan you own in the process). Simple tricks, like stirring garlicky toasted breadcrumbs into spaghetti right before serving, adding cubes of caramelized pumpkin to French onion soup, soaking turkey breast in an easy-to-make juniper-infused brine before roasting, are all it takes to make any meal—whether a weeknight supper or a holiday dinner—extraordinary.



*On Food and Cooking: The Science and Lore of the Kitchen, Completely Revised and Updated* (Scribner, \$35) by Harold McGee. Twenty years after its original publication, McGee's fascinating and indispensable masterpiece is back, and it's better and bigger than ever—quite a feat for a book that was a perfectly delightful 680-page romp the first time round. McGee has almost completely rewritten the text and expanded it by two-thirds. This new-and-improved classic is a must-have for anyone who loves to cook or eat.

—Kimberly Y. Masibay, associate editor



## A new flavor for sea salt

If you like olives, you'll love this sea salt from Majorca. Infused with roasted black olives, this salt blew us away with its heady aroma. But how should you use it? We think it's great sprinkled over bruschetta with fresh tomatoes or on broiled fish, or just tossed into a simple pasta with garlic and oil. *Miguel & Valentino olive flor de sal*, \$14.49 for 150 grams at *France 44* (612-925-3252, extension 3).



# Sweet and Crunchy Carrots

BY RUTH LIVELY

Carrots are like trusty old friends in the kitchen: supportive, low maintenance, and always there when you need them. They're often a background ingredient in braises, soups, and sautés, they keep well, and they're available year-round. Carrots are also an easy and satisfying snack, thanks to the deluge of "baby-cut" carrots in supermarkets. What sometimes gets forgotten is that carrots can be the feature attraction in many dishes, from soups and salads to purées and roasted vegetable combinations. Carrots take well to many different cooking methods; they can be boiled, steamed, braised, sautéed, glazed, stir-fried, roasted, and even grilled.

## Finding the freshest carrots

Your best guarantee of freshness is to buy carrots in bunches, with their leafy green tops still attached. Even when they're very large, carrots with tops should still be tender, juicy, and full of good flavor. Look for firm roots and fresh, dark greens. Once

you get them home, cut off the tops so they don't draw moisture from the roots. Instead of throwing away the tops, which are full of nutrition and flavor, try adding them to soups or chopping them and using in salads. When buying packaged carrots, look for plump, firm, fresh-looking roots with no sign of shaggy hair-like protrusions.

Baby-cut carrots, which are actually "adult" roots cut and trimmed to masquerade as sweet young things, have muscled in on full-size carrots' market share. These pre-peeled pieces are certainly convenient, since little or no prep is required, but that's the sole reason to buy them. Since they're already peeled, they lose moisture and flavor (and probably nutrients) faster than regular carrots.

I don't find any correlation between flavor and size. Thick or thin, carrots can be tender, sweet, and crunchy, or tired and lackluster. I prefer medium to fat carrots because they're easier to peel and there's less waste.

(In Season continues on p. 26.)

## Storing carrots

Although carrots have good keeping qualities, they sacrifice sweetness and flavor to long storage. For that reason, aim to buy in quantities you'll use within a week or two rather than buying in bulk.

## 24 karat flavor pairings

### herbs

basil  
bay leaves  
chervil  
chives  
cilantro  
mint  
parsley  
tarragon  
thyme

### spices

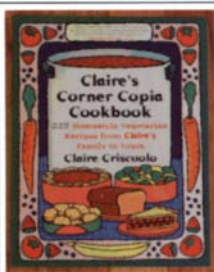
cayenne  
cinnamon  
cloves  
coriander  
cumin  
nutmeg

### fruits

currants  
fresh and dried  
hot chiles  
lemon juice  
and zest  
orange juice  
and zest  
raisins

### accents

ginger  
honey  
nuts  
vinegar



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READER SERVICE NO. 64

## Simple carrot side dishes

- ❖ **Braise whole small carrots** or long chunks in butter or olive oil, a little water or stock, and a bit of honey and Dijon mustard. Braise until tender and then let the liquid reduce to a syrupy, sweet-tangy glaze.
- ❖ **Roast carrots**, alone or with other root vegetables, lightly coated in olive oil and seasoned with salt, pepper, cumin, and a pinch of cayenne in a medium-hot oven until tender and caramelized.
- ❖ **Make a mashed carrot purée** by boiling carrots and perhaps parsnips and mashing as you would potatoes. Enrich the purée with butter or cream and season with a dash of nutmeg and ground ginger.
- ❖ **Fry up some spicy carrot fritters** using a mixture of grated carrots and potatoes, chopped scallions, beaten eggs, a little cream, flour, salt, and crushed red chile flakes.

## Roasted Carrot Soup

*Yields about 1 quart; serves four.*

A tablespoon of ginger gives a nice, throat-warming heat to this soup, which tastes best if it sits in the fridge several hours or overnight.

- 1 pound carrots, peeled and cut into 3-inch lengths**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter**
- ½ medium onion, cut into medium dice (to yield about ¾ cup)**
- 1 large rib celery, cut into medium dice (to yield about ½ cup)**
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger (from about ½-inch piece, peeled)**
- 2 cups homemade or low-salt chicken broth**
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt**
- ⅛ teaspoon ground white pepper**
- Chopped fresh chives or chervil for garnish (optional)**

Heat the oven to 375°F.

Put the carrots in a medium baking dish (11x7-inch is a good size, or any dish that will hold the carrots in a single layer without touching) and drizzle them with the olive oil. Toss them to coat well and roast, stirring once halfway through roasting, until they're tender, blistered, and

lightly browned in a few places, about 1 hour.

Melt the butter in a medium (at least 3-quart) heavy saucepan set over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until it's translucent and fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in the celery and ginger and cook until the celery softens a bit and the onions start to brown, 4 to 5 minutes. Add the roasted carrots, chicken broth, salt, pepper, and 2 cups of water. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat to medium low, and cover. Cook at a lively simmer until the carrots are very tender, about 45 minutes. Turn off the heat and let the liquid cool somewhat (or completely).

Purée the soup in a blender in batches, never filling the blender more than a third full, and bearing down firmly on the towel-covered lid so the soup doesn't come flying out. If serving immediately, return the soup to the pot and reheat; garnish with the chives or chervil if you like. Otherwise, refrigerate for up to five days; reheat gently and taste for salt before serving.

*Ruth Lively cooks, gardens, and writes in New Haven, Connecticut.* ♦

## A trio of carrot salads

Raw or very lightly cooked carrots are the foundation of many great salads. Experiment with different cuts for raw carrots: tiny matchsticks, long curls made with a vegetable peeler, or shredded on a grater or mandoline. To help larger pieces of carrot better absorb a dressing, blanch them very briefly in boiling salted water first. Here are three different directions to go with carrot salads.

- ❖ **Marinate shredded carrots** and dried currants or raisins in fresh orange juice and a dash of sherry or balsamic vinegar. Garnish with toasted almonds.
- ❖ **For a spicy North African carrot salad**, simmer thick slices of carrot in salted

water with a couple of bay leaves just until they lose their crunch. Drain, let dry, and toss with extra-virgin olive oil while still hot. Stir in a little harissa (hot chile paste) and chill. Arrange on a plate, along with chopped preserved lemon, slices of feta, and oil-cured black olives.

- ❖ **Mix up a vibrant, spicy salad** of julienned carrots seasoned with salt, sugar, a pinch of cayenne, and a good dousing of vinegar (white, cider, or malt). Toss with plenty of slivered fresh mint and basil and some thinly sliced fresh chile; garnish with a sprinkling of chopped toasted peanuts.

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# probe thermometers: can they take the heat?

BY MOLLY STEVENS

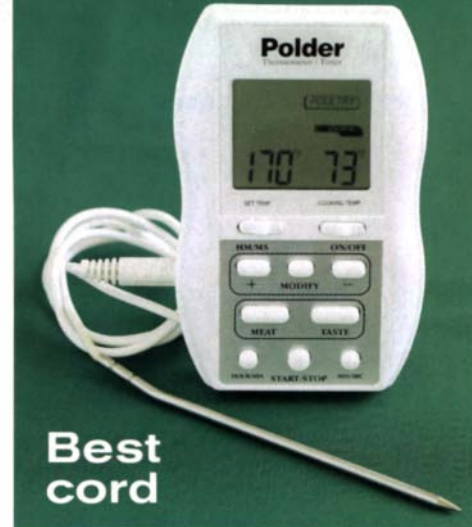
No sooner did instant-read thermometers become standard issue in any serious cook's tool kit than a whole new line of meat thermometers—called continuous-read, or probe thermometers—began to flood cookware catalogs. We decided it was time to evaluate them.

Probe thermometers consist of a thin metal rod (a probe), that's connected by a wire to a digital display. The probe is inserted into the meat and stays there throughout cooking; the display unit sits outside the oven and sounds an alarm when the preset temperature is reached.

**Probe thermometers aren't perfect.** One of the first strikes against them comes from the manufacturers themselves, who promote the “set it and forget it” approach—suggesting that once you set the target doneness temperature, you can walk away until the alarm sounds. In our experience,

there's no substitute for checking on roasting meats visually, tactilely, and—as they near doneness—frequently. But the real Achilles' heel of these instruments is that most of them aren't intended for roasting in an oven hotter than 392°F. We think this is a major limitation since many of our favorite methods for cooking meat involve high-heat roasting.

After putting fourteen probe thermometers through a battery of tests, we found three models to recommend (all of which can be used above 400°F). And despite some quibbles, we've concluded that probe thermometers actually help make you a better cook by showing how and at what pace the internal temperature of roasting foods increases. The key is to use these thermometers as tools rather than to rely on them to make judgments for you.



## Polder Preprogrammed Cooking Thermometer & Hour-Minute-Second Timer (361)

**\$19.99 at  
Amazon.com**

This thermometer performed well in all of our tests for accuracy, response time, and readability, but what we liked most is its rubberized cord and straight probe that can withstand high oven heat (up to 450°F) and even go in the dishwasher. The rubbery cord is also less awkward to use and to store than the woven metal cord on most other probes. An on/off switch and an automatic shutoff

when not in use save battery life. The preset doneness settings for meat can be easily reset, and there's an “other” category that allows you to ignore them altogether.

**DRAWBACKS:** The rubbery buttons have a nice feel, but they sometimes stick. The overall operation and programming can take getting used to. There's no way to disable the alert, so the thermometer will always sound when a target temperature is reached.



## Getting the best results from probe thermometers

- ❖ Many probe thermometers come with preset target temperatures for meat. We caution against blindly following these because they're based on conservative USDA recommendations and are not in accordance with many people's taste. Instead, consult a reliable cookbook (or see *Fine Cooking* #58, Kitchen Basics) for a more realistic listing of meat doneness temperatures.
- ❖ When cooking large cuts of meat, set the temperature for 10°F lower than your actual target. When the alarm sounds, try the probe in a few different spots to ensure that you haven't inserted it too near a bone or in a fatty spot. Either of these may throw off the reading.
- ❖ Always use a towel or potholder when adjusting the probe. The metal gets extremely hot.



**Most versatile**

### CDN ProAccurate Digital Cooking Thermometer and Timer (DTP482)

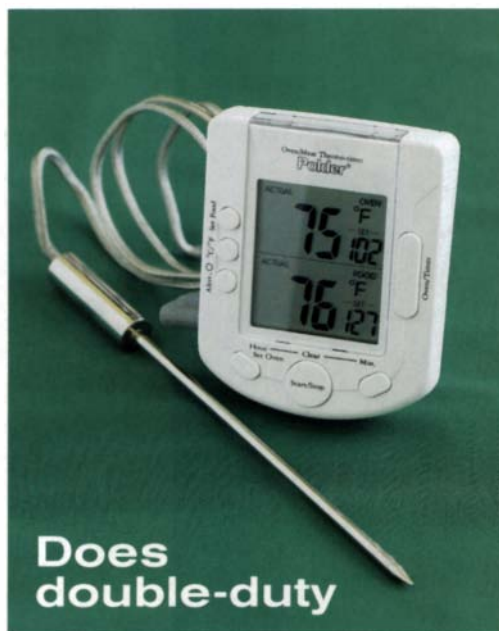
**\$29.99 at Cdnw.com**

This compact, well-designed thermometer is suitable for high-heat roasting (up to 482°F), as well as for candy-making and deep-frying thanks to a metal clip that suspends the probe near the side of the pot. We also appreciate the fact that the temperature alert can be disabled, allowing you to use it as a simple continuous-read thermometer with no alarm. This model performed very well in tests for accuracy and readability.

#### **DRAWBACKS:**

Mastering the toggle buttons and program-

mable features require a careful reading of the operation manual and a little practice. The response time was one of the slowest we encountered, but once the unit gets within range, it's extremely accurate and responsive to small changes in temperature. When using it as a candy or frying thermometer, you need to manipulate one of the preprogrammed meat settings (e.g., beef, pork, chicken) since there's no "other" category.



**Does double-duty**

### Polder Dual-Sensor Thermometer/Timer (894-90)

**\$29.95 at Surlatable.com**

In addition to providing an accurate read on the internal temperature of foods, this probe also monitors the oven temperature—a handy feature since many ovens aren't properly calibrated. The heavy-duty metal cord and probe have the highest heat-tolerance rating of any thermometer we tried: up to 572°F. We also like the absence of any preprogrammed temperature settings, the presence of an

on/off switch, and the helpful quick-reference instructions printed on the back of the unit.

**DRAWBACKS:** This thermometer has a considerable annoyance factor: when setting the target temperature, you can only go upward. So if you mistakenly bypass the temperature you're after, you have to go all the way past 572°F and start over from 86°F.

## Two more contenders

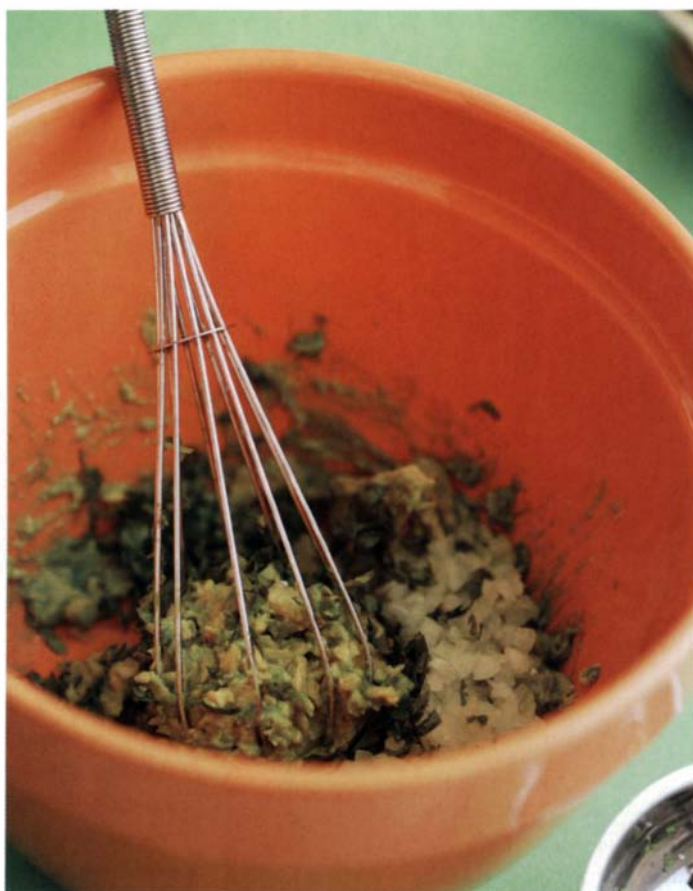
In addition to the thermometers featured at left, we tested eleven other models, most of which are not intended for use above 392°F. Of these, we found two that we liked for their simplicity, fast response time, and ease of use: the Acu-Rite Digital Meat Thermometer (00724) and the Pyrex Professional (17019). We'd love to see upgraded versions of these units to withstand higher heat, but if you only roast meats at lower temperatures, either of these models would be a good choice.

## How we tested

To evaluate the probe thermometers in this review, we used them to monitor the temperature of an ice bath, boiling water, oil for deep frying, a large roast, baking bread, and thin chops and burgers. We left the probes in the food as it cooked, and we used them as instant-read thermometers to check response time. We ranked the units based on their accuracy, readability, response time, temperature range, ease of use, and general feel.

One trait we couldn't fully test was durability, and for probe thermometers this is a concern. We've heard reports of probes failing, and while several manufacturers confirm that this occurs frequently, they attribute it more to misuse (such as using at too high a temperature) than to product flaws.

*Molly Stevens, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is the author of All About Braising.* ♦



## Winning tip

### Make guacamole with a whisk

I love guacamole, and, after 30 years of experimenting with different tools and techniques, I've come to the conclusion that a wire whisk is a much better tool than a fork or a mortar and pestle, particularly when I'm making a big batch. With a whisk, I can mash the avocado to a perfect consistency (leaving some small, toothsome chunks) and then stir in all the other ingredients.

—Helen M. Schwind,  
Glastonbury, Connecticut

### A prize for the best tip

Attention clever cooks: We want your best tips—we'll pay for the ones we publish—and we'll give a prize to the cleverest tip in each issue. Write to Tips, *Fine Cooking*, PO Box 5506, Newtown, CT 06470-5506 or email [fc@taunton.com](mailto:fc@taunton.com).

The prize for this issue's winner: an assortment of products (some shown here) from Silicone Zone; value, about \$200.



### Weighing grated cheese

When a recipe calls for grated cheese by weight, I weigh the block of cheese before I start grating and weigh it again, at intervals, as I grate. If the cheese weighs 8 ounces to start with and I need 2 ounces of grated cheese for a recipe, I grate until the block of cheese weighs 6 ounces. It's much easier than grating cheese onto a scale.

—Jan Mathieu, Luck, Wisconsin

### A better way to peel a potato

Sometimes peeling potatoes drives me nuts: The peeled part gets really slippery. To make the job easier, I peel one end of the potato and sink a fork firmly into that area. Then I hold the fork in one hand while I run the peeler down the length of the potato, quickly removing long strips of peel. It's so much easier than fumbling with a slippery potato.

—Willie Zee, Lincolnwood, Illinois



### Keep cauliflower florets intact

Whenever I try to separate a head of cauliflower into whole florets with a knife, I invariably slice through some of the florets. So after trimming the stem end as close to the base of the head as I can, I set aside my knife, get out my melon baller, and start scooping out the remaining stem. It takes just a few scoops to remove most of the flesh. Now the lovely florets are only loosely attached to one another, and it's very easy to separate them, whole and intact.

—Alphonda S. Thorn, New York City

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## Homemade croutons in a wok

I make croutons in a wok on my stovetop. It beats a skillet or baking sheet for three reasons: I can toss the croutons and oil together right in the wok, instead of tossing the bread and oil in a separate bowl. (Why dirty an extra dish if you can avoid it?) The wok holds more cubes of bread than a skillet or baking sheet. And the wok's deep bowl gives me plenty of room to stir the croutons as they brown.

—Kara Adanalian, Fairfax, California



## Tie a cork to the steamer basket

When I use a steamer basket, the tiny metal piece in the center, which serves as the basket's handle, gets too hot to touch with bare fingers and is too small to easily grab with a potholder or an oven mitt. To solve the problem, I wrapped thin wire around a cork and threaded the wire through the small hole at the top of the basket's centerpiece. To remove the hot basket from a pot, I just grab the ends of the cork and lift—no burned fingers.

—Faye Field, Kihei, Hawaii

## Give flour a shake before measuring

Before spooning flour into a measuring cup, give the flour bag or canister a good shake. It aerates the flour for more accurate measuring.

—Naomi Kurkjian, Piedmont, California



## Skewer a food processor blade to make washing safer

Washing a metal food processor blade by hand can be tricky. Instead of trying to hold the blade with one hand while sponging it off with the other, I wedge the handle of a wooden spoon into the cavity on the underside of the spindle and hold the spoon, keeping my fingers (at least on the hand that's not holding the sponge) a safe distance from the sharp blades.

—Maryellen Driscoll, editor at large ♦

## handling hot ramekins

### Rubber bands give tongs more grip

I love making baked custards, but until recently I had trouble getting the hot ramekins out of the water bath and onto the rack to cool. Spatulas and oven mitts didn't work. Even metal tongs were hit-or-miss—as often as not, the ramekins would slip out of the tongs and splash back into the water. Now I wrap rubber bands around each of the tongs' gripping ends, and slipping ramekins are a thing of the past.

—Cassia Schell, Bay Village, Ohio

*Editors' note: We used Cassia's tip when photographing the pudding cakes on p. 65.*

### Canning tongs have a slipproof grip

I remove hot ceramic ramekins or metal molds from a water bath with rubberized canning tongs. Their grip is much more secure than regular metal tongs.

—Donna Ferries, Wilton, Connecticut

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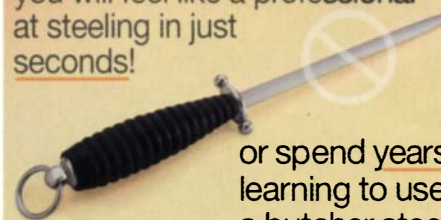
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READER SERVICE NO. 89

Dinner with friends

# A Texas Chili Menu

Build a make-ahead menu around a gutsy beef chili and a savory cornbread



## what to drink

The combination of savory and spicy flavors and dark beer in the chili makes me want to reach for a beer. The perfect pairing would be a bottle of the same beer that Paula and David use in the recipe, Shiner Bock, but you've got lots of other choices, too. The body and texture of the chili call for something robust: think ale, specifically a rich, full-bodied spicy one, like Anchor Steam's Liberty Ale, Samuel Smith's Nut Brown Ale, or Dos Equis Amber. A fine Belgian ale such as Duval or Orval would also be delicious. Finally, try a hand-crafted bourbon such as Knob Creek (\$29) or Blanton's (\$49) to sip with the pecan squares.

*Tim Gaiser, a contributing editor to Fine Cooking, is a master sommelier.*

## menu

for eight

**Texas Beef Chili  
with Poblanos  
& Beer**

**Cornbread with  
Scallions & Bacon**

**Ruby Salad with  
Crumbled Feta &  
Spicy Pepitas**

**Mexican-Style  
Pecan-Chocolate  
Squares**

BY PAULA DISBROWE &  
DAVID NORMAN



tomatoes and beans for garnish

In that old country song "Settin' the Woods on Fire," Hank Williams croons about a first-rate night of honky-tonk fun. "I don't care who thinks we're silly, you'll be daffy and I'll be dilly, we'll order up two bowls of chili..." As Texas transplants and passionate chili converts, we see what he means. Who doesn't get worked up over a bowl of red?

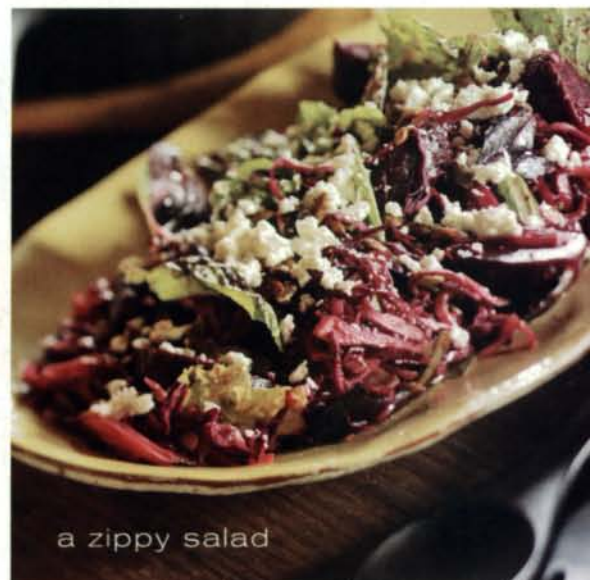
But because we cook for a living, we don't want to prepare fussy menus when we cook for friends. We'd rather keep things easy. When guests arrive, we want the candles lit, the porch swept, the beer

chilled, and the food prepared. We want to enjoy our own party. For all these reasons, and many more, all roads lead to Texas chili, which is perfect for entertaining, since it's a definite make-ahead. Texas chili has a proud and colorful history, and there are a few essential steps to making it true to Lone Star tradition.

Like any rich stew, chili is best made at least a day ahead to let the texture improve and the flavors meld and mellow. Plus, chilling overnight makes it easy to skim off any fat before reheating. Pure ground chile (not the old-fashioned chili powder mix, which typically contains



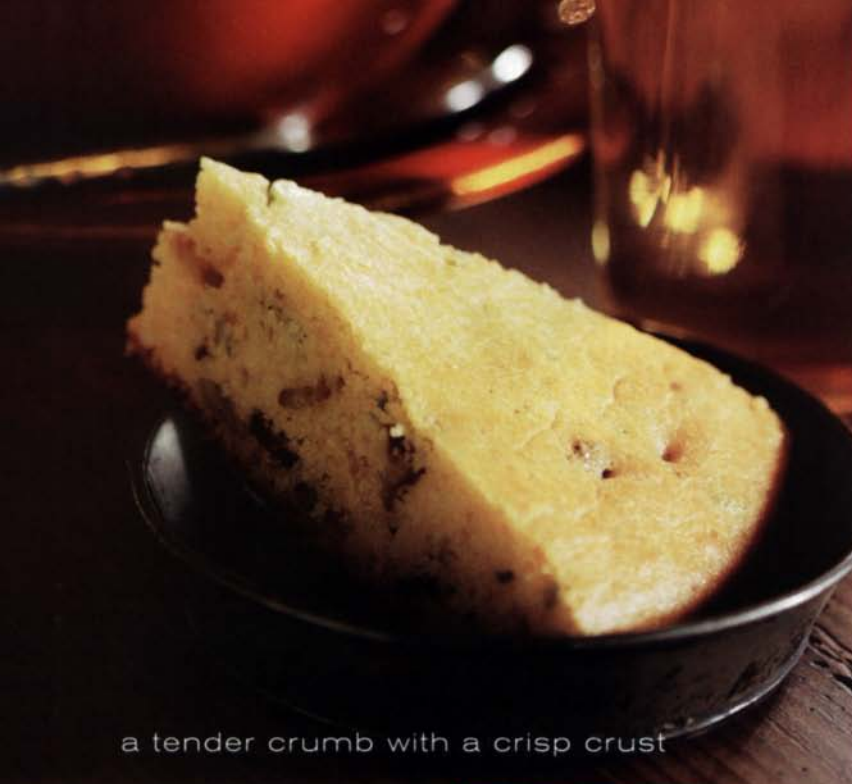
straight from the pan



a zippy salad



a nip of bourbon with dessert



## Make the cornbread the morning of your dinner

### Cornbread with Scallions & Bacon

*Yields one 10-inch round bread; serves eight.*

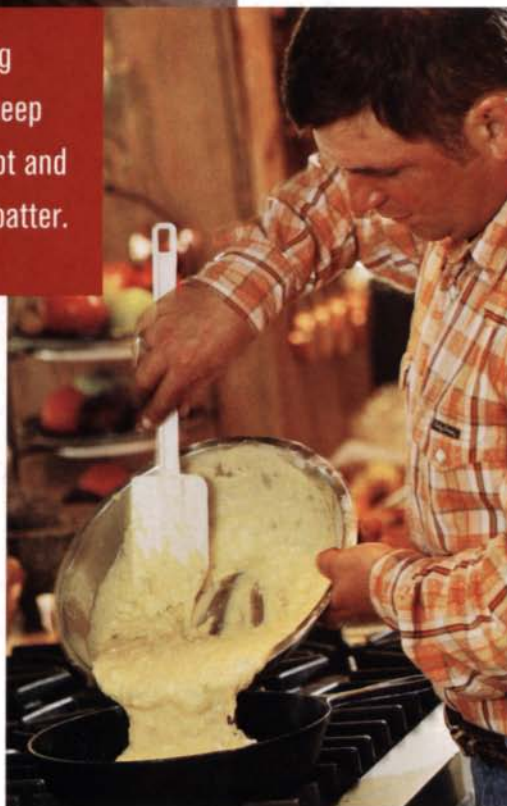
This cornbread has a moist, tender crumb. It gets a nice crisp crust in a cast-iron skillet.

- 4½ ounces (1 cup) unbleached all-purpose flour**
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal, preferably stone-ground**
- 2 teaspoons baking powder**
- 1 teaspoon table salt**
- 1¼ cups low-fat milk**
- 2 tablespoons honey**
- 1 large egg**
- ⅓ cup corn oil**
- 8 scallions (white and light green parts only), trimmed and thinly sliced**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 3 thick slices bacon**

Heat the oven to 400°F. In a large bowl, whisk the flour, cornmeal, baking powder, and salt. In a medium bowl, whisk the milk, honey, egg, corn oil, scallions, and 2 grinds black pepper until well combined. In a 10-inch ovenproof skillet (preferably cast iron), cook the bacon over medium heat until crisp. Transfer to paper towels to drain. Spoon off all but about a tablespoon of the bacon fat from the skillet. Add the milk mixture to the dry ingredients and stir with a rubber spatula until the ingredients are just blended. Crumble the bacon and fold it in; don't overmix.

Pour the batter into the hot skillet and bake until the top is golden brown, firm, and springy to the touch, 20 to 25 minutes; a toothpick inserted in the center should come out clean. Let cool in the pan for 5 minutes. Turn out onto a rack or serve in the pan, warm or at room temperature.

After cooking the bacon, keep the skillet hot and pour in the batter.



other spices and salt) is a must. We use New Mexico and chipotle chile powders, which add fiery and smoky notes, but other pure chile powders will work. Browning the meat is a crucial step. Let the pan get very hot before adding the cubes of beef. Brown the meat in batches, as crowding would create too much moisture and cause the meat to steam. Let all the sides of the meat get dark and crusty.

We bake our cornbread in a heated cast-iron skillet to ensure a crisp crust. We serve it in the same pan because it looks so darn cute on the table. You can bake the cornbread in the morning and reheat it (covered with foil, at 350°F, just until warmed through) before serving.

Pure color was the inspiration for the Ruby Salad, and we love how the bold, unexpected tumble of ingredients hold their own against the chili.

For us, dessert is an easy call. We have three pecan orchards on the ranch, so chewy pecan squares are a natural. In a nod to Mexican chocolate, which

is perfumed with cinnamon, we scent the cookie base with spice and add a thin layer of bittersweet chocolate below the pecan filling. The bar cookies can be made a day or two ahead. We serve the bars with vanilla ice cream and single-batch bourbon (our favorite is Knob Creek) and plenty of good strong coffee. Another log on the fire, and it's hard to imagine a better evening.

# For the best flavor, make the chili a day ahead



A dark  
beer adds  
depth and  
complexity.

## A bowl of red

Texas chili is all about the beef—think of it as a spicy beef stew. The broth gets its oomph from pure chile powders (for information, see p. 72). We make our chili special with plenty of sweet onions and fresh poblano chiles, which lend aroma and flavor, and also help temper the dried spices. A bottle of dark beer lends deep flavor. True to Texas tradition, we don't put beans in our chili, but we do heat up a bowl to serve on the side, along with tomatoes, chopped onions, cilantro, and sour cream.

### Texas Beef Chili with Poblanos & Beer

*Serves eight; yields 8 cups.*

This chili has a pleasant kick. It thickens as it sits overnight, and the flavors round out and deepen. We like it best with chipotle and New Mexico chile powders, but ancho, another pure chile powder, is a good substitute for New Mexico. (For more about chile powders, see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 72.) Both ancho and chipotle powders are available from McCormick in your grocery store. For mail-order options, see p. 78.

- 3 tablespoons olive oil; more as needed**
- 2 large sweet onions, diced (about 4 cups)**
- 2 large fresh poblano peppers (or green bell peppers), stemmed, seeded, and diced (about 1½ cups)**
- 5 cloves garlic, minced**
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt; more to taste**
- 4½ pounds boneless beef chuck, cut into 1-inch cubes**
- 2 bay leaves**
- 2 cinnamon sticks, 3 to 4 inches long**
- 3 tablespoons New Mexico chile powder (or 2 tablespoons ancho chile powder)**
- 1 tablespoon chipotle chile powder**
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin**
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves**
- 12-ounce bottle amber ale, such as Shiner Bock (made in Shiner, Texas), Dos Equis Amber, or Anchor Steam Liberty Ale**
- 1½ quarts homemade or low-salt beef broth**

#### FOR THE GARNISH:

- 2 14-ounce cans kidney beans, rinsed and drained**
- 1 medium red onion, chopped**
- 3 medium tomatoes, cored, seeded, and chopped**
- ⅓ cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro**
- 12 ounces sour cream or whole-milk plain yogurt**

In a 12-inch skillet, heat 2 tablespoons of the oil over medium-high heat. Add the onions and sauté until softened, translucent, and starting to brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Add the poblanos, reduce the heat to medium, and cook, stirring

occasionally, until the poblanos soften, another 8 to 10 minutes. If the pan seems dry, add a little more olive oil. Add the garlic and 1 teaspoon salt and sauté for another 5 minutes. Set aside.

Meanwhile, heat the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil in an 8-quart or larger Dutch oven (preferably enameled cast iron) over medium-high heat. Sear the beef cubes until browned and crusty on two sides, working in batches to avoid crowding the pan. With tongs or a slotted spoon, transfer the browned beef to a bowl. During searing, it's fine if the pan bottom gets quite dark, but if it smells like it's burning, reduce the heat a bit. If the pan ever gets dry, add a little more oil.

Once all the beef is seared and set aside, add the onions and peppers to the pan, along with the bay leaves, cinnamon sticks, chile powders, cumin, and cloves and cook, stirring, until the spices coat the vegetables and are fragrant, 15 to 30 seconds. Slowly add the beer while scraping the pan bottom with a wooden spoon to dissolve the coating of spices. Simmer until the beer is reduced by about half and the mixture has thickened slightly, 5 to 7 minutes. Add the beef, along with any accumulated juices, and the beef broth. Bring to a simmer and then reduce the heat to medium low. Simmer, partially covered, for 3 hours, stirring occasionally. Test a cube of meat—you should be able to cut it with a spoon. Discard the cinnamon sticks and bay leaves.

If not serving immediately, chill overnight. The next day, skim any fat from the top, if necessary, before reheating.

To serve, heat the chili gently. Using a slotted spoon, transfer about 2 cups of the beef cubes to a plate. Shred the meat with a fork and return it to pot. (The shredded meat will help create a thicker texture.) Taste and add more salt if needed. Heat the beans in a medium bowl covered with plastic in the microwave (or heat them gently in a saucepan). Arrange the beans, chopped red onion, tomatoes, cilantro, and sour cream in small bowls to serve as garnishes with the chili.

# Jump-start the salad by roasting the beets ahead



## Ruby Salad with Crumbled Feta & Spicy Pepitas

*Serves eight.*

### FOR THE BEETS:

**1 bunch small beets (4 to 5), trimmed and scrubbed**  
**2 to 3 sprigs fresh thyme or rosemary, or 3 fresh bay leaves**  
**½ teaspoon kosher or sea salt**  
**1 tablespoon olive oil**

### FOR THE VINAIGRETTE:

**1 tablespoon Dijon mustard**  
**2 tablespoons sherry vinegar**  
**2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil**

### FOR THE SALAD:

**4 cups very thinly sliced red cabbage (from 1 very small head)**  
**1 medium red onion, very thinly sliced**  
**4 ounces (4 cups) mixed baby greens**  
**6 ounces feta cheese, crumbled (about ½ cup)**  
**6 ounces spicy pepitas (1 generous cup; see the recipe at left)**

**Roast the beets:** Heat the oven to 400°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil. Put the beets, herbs, salt, and a drizzle of olive oil in the center; toss the beets to coat. Fold the foil into a loose-fitting but tightly sealed packet around the beets. Roast the packet on the baking sheet until the beets are tender, about 1 hour and 20 minutes. Let the beets cool completely in the foil. When cool, use a paring knife to peel and slice the beets into wedges (six to eight per beet.) The beets can be roasted up to two days ahead and refrigerated.

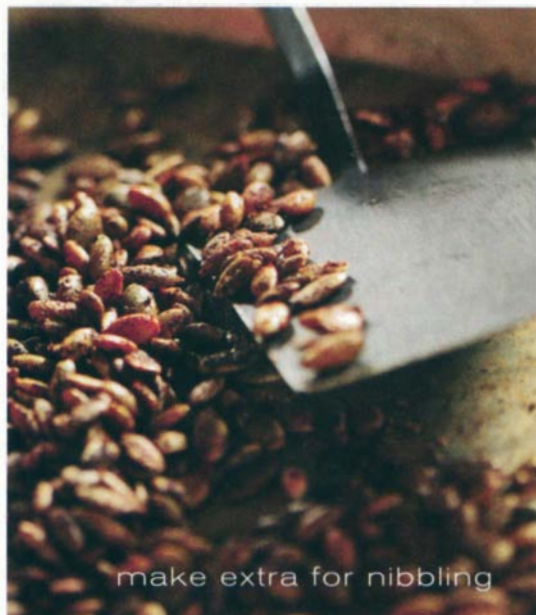
**Make the vinaigrette:** In a small bowl, combine the mustard, vinegar, lemon juice, ¼ teaspoon salt, and a few grinds of pepper. Slowly whisk in the oil.

**Make the salad:** Combine the cabbage and onion in a medium bowl and set aside. Up to an hour before serving, add the beet wedges to the cabbage and onions; toss gently with half of the vinaigrette.

Just before serving, add the baby greens, half of the feta, and half of the pepitas; toss with the remaining vinaigrette. Arrange on a big serving platter and garnish with the remaining feta and pepitas.

For wild color,  
toss the beets  
with the slaw  
and dressing  
ahead of time.

a colorful tumble of textures



## Spicy Pepitas

Toss 6 ounces pepitas (available in natural-foods or specialty stores) with 1 teaspoon corn or peanut oil, 1 teaspoon pure chile powder (such as New Mexico or ancho), and ¾ teaspoon kosher salt. Spread evenly on a rimmed baking sheet and roast at 375°F until golden and fragrant, 6 to 8 minutes (you'll hear them popping). Let cool completely on the baking sheet. If making ahead, store in an airtight container.

make extra for nibbling

# The pecan bars keep well— if you can resist them



A bench scraper  
is the best tool for  
cutting these chewy  
squares neatly.

## Mexican-Style Pecan-Chocolate Squares

*Yields sixteen 2½-inch squares.*

### FOR THE COOKIE BASE:

**6 ounces (¾ cup) cold unsalted butter, cut into ½-inch pieces**  
**9 ounces (2 cups) unbleached all-purpose flour**  
**½ cup packed light brown sugar**  
**2 teaspoons ground cinnamon**  
**½ teaspoon table salt**  
**2 ounces finely grated bittersweet chocolate (a scant ½ cup)**

### FOR THE PECAN TOPPING:

**10 ounces pecans (3 cups), toasted**  
**¼ pound (½ cup) unsalted butter**  
**1 cup packed dark brown sugar**  
**⅓ cup honey**  
**2 tablespoons heavy cream**  
**½ teaspoon table salt**

**Make the cookie base:** Position a rack in the middle of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Put the butter in a food processor, along with the flour, light brown sugar, cinnamon, and salt. Pulse until the mixture is well combined (about 20 pulses). Scatter the dough into a 9x9-inch baking pan and press it evenly over the bottom. (Wipe out the processor bowl but don't bother washing it.) Bake the base until firm and lightly browned, about 25 minutes. When the cookie base comes out of the oven, sprinkle the grated chocolate evenly over the top. (Don't turn off the oven.) Set the pan aside.

**Make the pecan topping:** As the cookie base bakes, pulse the pecans in the food processor until coarsely chopped. In a medium-size heavy saucepan, melt the butter. Stir in the dark brown sugar, honey, cream, and salt. Simmer for 1 minute, stirring occasionally. Stir in the pecans. Pour the pecan mixture over the chocolate-sprinkled cookie base, spreading evenly. Bake until much of the filling is bubbling (not just the edges), 16 to 18 minutes. Let cool completely in the pan. When ready to serve, cut into 16 squares. Tightly covered, these bars will keep for about five days (though they never last that long).

## Timetable

### Up to two days ahead:

Shop for ingredients.  
Make the chili.  
Roast the beets for the salad.  
Bake the pecan squares.  
Make the vinaigrette.  
Prepare and toast the spicy pepitas.

### That morning:

Skim the fat from the chili.  
Peel and slice the beets.  
Clean the salad greens;  
refrigerate in a zip-top bag.  
Clean the cilantro for the chili  
garnish and pluck the leaves;  
refrigerate in a zip-top bag.  
Bake the cornbread.

### An hour before serving:

Combine the cabbage, red onion, and beets with half of the vinaigrette.  
Take the chili out of the fridge;  
warm gently.  
Heat the cornbread.  
Prepare the salad garnishes.  
Prepare the chili toppings;  
arrange in bowls.

### Just before serving:

Finish tossing the salad.  
Slice the cornbread.

*David Norman and Paula Disbrowe are the chefs at Hart & Hind Ranch, a spa in Rio Frio, Texas. Paula's cookbook, Cowgirl Cuisine, will be published by HarperCollins in 2006. ♦*

# Perfecting Roast Chicken



*Crisp skin, perfectly cooked meat, and a savory pan sauce—this roast chicken has it all.*

# How to get crisp skin and juicy breast meat



## Salt the bird and let it sit overnight

Letting the salted chicken sit in the fridge uncovered will help dry the skin, which encourages a crisp, finished result.

## Buy the best chicken you can find

Buying a good chicken is as important as knowing how to roast it. My advice: Buy the best you can afford. The better the bird was raised and fed, the better it will taste. For weeknight cooking and small dinner parties, a chicken labeled “no antibiotics,” “no hormones,” “naturally fed,” or “organic” isn’t likely to break the budget. Choose a small chicken—a 3½- to 4-pounder roasts beautifully and serves four.



## Start by roasting breast side down and flip over halfway through

Starting with the breast down and then turning the bird over keeps the breast meat from drying out before the rest of the chicken has cooked. Use wads of paper towels to protect your hands while flipping the chicken.

BY PAM ANDERSON

**Y**ears ago, a colleague hired me to test recipes for his book. I distinctly remember being utterly stumped when I came to the roast chicken recipe: I just couldn’t get it right. If I roasted the chicken breast to juicy perfection, the legs and thighs were still pink. If I nailed the legs and thighs, the breast was consistently parched. I roasted chicken after chicken, testing different cooking times and temperatures, but never perfected the technique.

It wasn’t until later when I set out to perfect roast turkey that I finally got it, and I learned two things: One, unless you rotate the bird during roasting, the breast will always overcook before the legs and thighs get done. And two, salt is key to producing a fully seasoned bird.

Chicken presents an additional problem. Unlike a turkey, which spends enough time in the oven to turn mahogany brown, these smaller birds—no matter what the oven temperature—never brown as well or as evenly as I’d like. With this knowledge, I developed a first-rate roast chicken.

**For extra-juicy breast meat, roast the chicken breast down first.** This initial roasting, for 30 minutes or so, means that the breast meat won’t dry out. To cradle the bird properly, you’ll need a V-rack like the one pictured on p. 42.

**To get crisp, browned skin, salt the chicken and then refrigerate it.** Many poultry recipes out there (including one of mine) recommend brining—soaking poultry in salt water before roasting. The chicken absorbs the salt water so that the meat tastes seasoned throughout. But I’ve recently discovered that generously sprinkling the chicken

with kosher salt and refrigerating it is simpler and just about as effective in terms of flavor. Salt on the surface won't necessarily set into the muscle tissue, but you'll still get flavor benefits—and crisp skin. The salted chicken can be roasted in as soon as four hours, but it can also sit in the refrigerator for up to two days. Leave the seasoned bird uncovered in the fridge. According to Dr. Alan Sams, head of the poultry department at Texas A&M University, the combination of salting the chicken and refrigerating it uncovered helps the skin dry out and thus crisp during roasting.

**Coax browning along with a tiny sprinkling of sugar.** Since a whole chicken roasts in less than an hour, there isn't enough time for it to develop gorgeous mahogany-brown skin. To encourage browning, I sprinkle the chicken all over with a little sugar before putting it in the oven. (The sugar flavor stays very much in the background but it may cause some dark spots on your chicken's skin. Don't worry—they're not burned.)

**Add water during roasting to keep the pan drippings from burning.** The water helps those rich drippings stay tasty for a flavorful sauce. By the time the chicken is done, the water will have boiled down, and the drippings will be ready for one of the delicious, easy pan sauces at far right. If the pan starts smoking before it's time to turn the chicken, add the water sooner than it says to in the recipe. If the pan dries out and the drippings start to burn before the chicken is done, add a little more water to the pan.



## Roast Chicken

*Serves four.*

**3½- to 4-pound whole chicken**  
**2 tablespoons kosher salt**  
**1½ tablespoons olive oil**  
**2 teaspoons granulated sugar**  
**Freshly ground black pepper**

### UP TO TWO DAYS AHEAD:

Sprinkle the chicken inside and out with the salt; set it on a wire rack and set the rack over a plate. Refrigerate uncovered for at least 2 hours (4 hours is better) or up to two days.

### TWO HOURS BEFORE SERVING:

Position a rack in the lower middle of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F. Cross the chicken legs and tie them together; tuck the wings under the chicken. Brush the breast side of the chicken all over with some of the olive oil; sprinkle with 1 teaspoon of the sugar and a few grinds of pepper. Set the chicken, breast side down, on a V-rack set in a small metal roasting pan (about 9x13 inches; don't use ceramic or Pyrex). Brush the back side of the chicken with the remaining oil and sprinkle with ½ teaspoon sugar and a few more grinds of pepper. Have ready 1 cup water and turn on the exhaust fan.

Roast the chicken, breast side down, until the back is deep golden brown, about 30 minutes. Check frequently and if the

chicken drippings appear to be burning, add ¼ to ½ cup of the water to the pan.

Remove the chicken from the oven. With a wad of paper towels in each hand, turn the chicken so it's breast side up. Sprinkle with the remaining ½ teaspoon sugar and add all or what remains of the 1 cup of water to the pan. Return the chicken to the oven and roast, breast side up, until the chicken is golden brown and an instant-read thermometer inserted in the thigh registers 175°F, another 15 to 20 minutes.

Transfer the chicken to a cutting board to rest for at least 15 minutes and up to 30 minutes for chicken served warm (or up to 2 hours if serving the chicken at room temperature).

### MAKE THE SAUCE AND SERVE:

Meanwhile, make the sauce. Remove the V-rack from the roasting pan and tilt the pan so the juices collect in one corner. Spoon off and discard as much of the clear fat as possible. Set the pan and its drippings aside. Choose one of the pan sauce recipes at right.

When ready to serve, carve the chicken (see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 70). Serve with the warm pan sauce.



## Useful tools

A heavy-duty metal roasting pan will net you the best results when roasting chicken—and it's a handy piece of equipment even for the occasional cook. Roasting pans are also great for gratins, roasting vegetables, and for custards and cheesecakes that need to be baked in a water bath.

To cradle the bird breast side down, you'll need a V-rack, which sells for around \$10 or less and is sometimes sold with a roasting pan as a set. For recommendations, see p. 78.



## Apricot & Prune Sauce with Moroccan Spices

*Yields about 1½ cups.*

- 1 cup homemade or low-salt chicken broth**
- ¼ cup orange juice concentrate**
- ¼ cup dry vermouth**
- 2 tablespoons olive oil**
- 4 cloves garlic, minced**
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin**
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger**
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon**
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves**
- ½ cup dried apricots, halved**
- ½ cup prunes, halved**
- Degreased juices from the roasting pan**
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

While the chicken roasts, combine the broth, orange juice concentrate, and vermouth; set aside. Heat the olive oil in a 10-inch skillet or sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the garlic, cumin, ginger, cinnamon, and cloves; sauté until fragrant and golden, less than 1 minute. Add the apricots and prunes and sauté for about 1 minute. Add the broth mixture and degreased pan juices; simmer until reduced to about 1½ to 1⅔ cups, 5 to 8 minutes. Stir in the cilantro and season to taste with salt and pepper. Pour into a serving vessel and serve alongside the carved chicken.

### wine pairings

A fruity, slightly sweet white wine would be delicious. Try the 2003 Pine Ridge Chenin Blanc-Viognier (\$14) from California or the 2003 Chateau Ste. Michelle "Eroica" Riesling (\$22) from Washington State.

## Tomato-Jalapeño Sauce with Hominy, Cilantro & Lime

*Yields about 2 cups.*

You'll find canned hominy next to the canned beans at the supermarket. Those chewy nuggets give great texture and corn flavor to the finished sauce.

- 1 cup homemade or low-salt chicken broth**
- ½ cup fresh or canned diced tomatoes (about 1 medium plum tomato)**
- 3 tablespoons fresh lime juice**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- 4 cloves garlic, minced**
- 1 fresh jalapeño, seeded and minced**
- 1 cup canned golden or white hominy, drained and rinsed**
- Degreased juices from the roasting pan**
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

While the chicken roasts, combine the broth, tomatoes, and lime juice; set aside. Heat the oil in a 10-inch skillet or sauté pan over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and jalapeño; sauté until fragrant and golden, less than 1 minute. Add the hominy and sauté until the moisture has evaporated, 1 minute. Add the broth mixture and degreased pan juices; simmer until reduced to about 2 cups, 7 to 10 minutes. Stir in the cilantro and season with salt and pepper. Pour into a serving vessel and serve alongside the carved chicken.

### wine pairings

Try a young, fruity Grenache blend like the 2002 d'Arenberg Stump Jump Grenache-Shiraz-Mourvedre (\$12) from Australia or the 2002 Mas Grand Plagniol "Tradition" (\$12) from the Costieres de Nimes region of southern France.

## Lemon Artichoke Sauce with Garlic & Parsley

*Yields 2 cups.*

- 1 cup homemade or low-salt chicken broth**
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice**
- ¼ cup dry vermouth**
- 2 teaspoons olive oil**
- 4 cloves garlic, minced**
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano**
- 14- to 15-ounce can whole artichoke hearts, rinsed, drained, and cut into sixths**
- Degreased juices from the roasting pan**
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

While the chicken roasts, combine the broth, lemon juice, and vermouth; set aside. Heat the olive oil in a 10-inch skillet over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and oregano; sauté until fragrant and golden, less than 1 minute. Add the artichokes and sauté until any moisture has evaporated, about 1 minute. Add the broth mixture and degreased pan juices; simmer until reduced to about 2 cups, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in the parsley and season to taste with salt and pepper. Pour into a serving vessel and serve alongside the carved chicken.

### wine pairings

Pour a bone-dry, crisp Italian white without oak. Try the 2003 Stephano Massone Gavi "Massera" or the 2003 Gini Soave Classico (both \$14).

Use the pan drippings to make a quick sauce

Spoon off the fat and save those pan drippings to use in a tasty pan sauce that makes the finished dish more special.

*Pam Anderson is the author of How to Cook without a Book and CookSmart. Her new book, How to Share a Meal, will be published by Houghton Mifflin in September. ♦*

# Zesty Roasted Vegetable Combinations



A finishing toss with flavorful ingredients transforms roasted vegetables into vibrant side dishes

BY JULIANNA GRIMES BOTTCHER

**B**efore I married my meat-and-potatoes-loving husband, I was an occasional vegetarian. For one person, a meatless meal was often the most convenient and economical option, and in winter, roasting became my cooking method of choice; it's mostly hands-free, and the vegetables come out crisp, golden, and intensely flavored.

Now, my menus often feature meat, but I still rely on roasted vegetables to round out the plate during the blustery days of winter. And although plain roasted vegetables make great basic side dishes, with a little experimentation, I learned that tossing them with bright accents really punctuates the deep, rich flavor of the vegetables. I've provided a few recipe ideas starting on p. 46, but you can adopt this trick and toss in your own choice of flavors by following the steps at right.

**Wait until the end of cooking to toss vegetables with flavorful ingredients.** Nuts, butter, and cheese often burn if they roast in the pan with the vegetables, and liquids like citrus juices can cause the vegetables to steam instead of roast. Hardy wood-stemmed herbs like rosemary and thyme are the exception: Because they can withstand high heat, they can be tossed with the vegetables before roasting. Also, garlic burns after about 30 minutes, so if you choose to add it to quick-cooking vegetables, you can do so before roasting. If you're using vegetables that take longer to cook, you can stir a small amount of raw garlic into the vegetables after they're done. (See the box above right for roasting times.)

**Author's tip:** For the most even cooking, choose a heavy pan like a Pyrex baking dish.

# Three steps to customizing your own roasted vegetable combinations

1

## Choose veggies that cook at the same rate

If you want to improvise your own roasted vegetable dish, first choose vegetables that will all cook at about the same rate, and be sure to cut them into similar-size pieces.

### LONG COOKING TIME (30 minutes or longer):

potatoes  
sweet potatoes  
carrots  
parsnips  
rutabaga  
winter squash  
Brussels sprouts

### AVERAGE COOKING TIME (about 20 to 30 minutes):

turnips  
onions  
cauliflower  
broccoli  
sugar snap peas  
quartered shallots  
fennel  
whole garlic cloves

### QUICK COOKING TIME (under 20 minutes):

green beans  
mushrooms  
thinly sliced shallots  
or onions



2

## Use a heavy pan and high heat

For roasting vegetables, I like to use a heavy roasting pan or Pyrex baking dish, not a baking sheet. Because roasting pans and baking dishes are designed to withstand high heat, they help keep the vegetables from burning. Pick the right size pan for the job at hand.

And don't be afraid to crank up the heat and let the vegetables sizzle. The heat blisters the vegetables' surfaces, and this is just what you're after—a pale-looking vegetable will have a pale flavor to match.



3

## Add flavor after roasting with toss-ins

❖ Nuts and seeds: toasted pecans, almonds, walnuts, pistachios, hazelnuts, pine nuts, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds, shelled sunflower seeds

❖ Cheeses: goat cheese, blue cheese, feta, shaved Parmigiano Reggiano

❖ Sauces and dressings: vinaigrettes, curry pastes

❖ Butter: flavored with herbs and zest

❖ Juices: fresh lemon, lime, orange, or grapefruit

❖ Zests: freshly grated lemon, lime, or orange

❖ Delicate oils: truffle oil, walnut oil, avocado oil

❖ Chopped fresh leafy herbs: basil, cilantro, parsley, mint, dill

❖ Garlic: finely chopped (add according to vegetable cooking time)



## Roasted Carrots & Parsnips with Shallot & Herb Butter

*Serves two to three.*

- 5 large carrots (about 1 pound), peeled**
- 4 large parsnips (about 1 pound), peeled**
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt**
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**
- ¼ cup unsalted butter, softened at room temperature**
- 2 tablespoons minced shallot**
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh chives**
- 1½ teaspoons finely chopped fresh rosemary**
- 1½ teaspoons chopped fresh thyme**
- 1 clove garlic, minced**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F.

Cut the carrots and parsnips into 2x¼-inch matchsticks. Put them in a large bowl; toss with the oil. Sprinkle with the salt and pepper and toss again. Transfer the vegetables to a 10x15-inch Pyrex dish and roast, stirring every 15 minutes, until the vegetables are nicely browned, 40 to 45 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine the butter, shallot, chives, rosemary, thyme, and garlic in a small bowl and stir well. Add the butter to the roasted vegetables and toss to coat. Serve immediately.



**Fiery Thai chiles** don't mellow when cooked. Their main purpose in this dish is to add a colorful contrast—and some heat.

## Spicy Asian Roasted Broccoli & Snap Peas

*Serves four.*

If you have trouble finding fresh Thai chiles (also called bird chiles), try using the same amount of the dried version. For more on miso, see From Our Test Kitchen, p. 68.

- 5 cups broccoli florets (from about 2 broccoli crowns)**
- 3 cups (about 12 ounces) fresh sugar snap peas, trimmed**
- 6 to 8 red or orange fresh Thai chiles, stems trimmed**
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 tablespoons plus 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil**
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt**
- 2 tablespoons fresh cilantro leaves, chopped**
- 1½ tablespoons light-colored (white or yellow) miso (see p. 68 for more information)**
- 1 tablespoon honey**
- 2 teaspoons sambal oelek (Asian chile paste)**
- 1 teaspoon finely grated orange zest**
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger**
- 1 clove garlic, minced**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F.

Put the broccoli, peas, and chiles in a large bowl; toss with 2 tablespoons of the olive oil and 2 tablespoons of the sesame oil. Sprinkle with salt and toss again. Transfer the vegetables to a 10x15-inch Pyrex dish and roast, stirring once, until the peas are lightly browned and the broccoli tops are quite dark in spots, about 22 minutes.

Meanwhile, in a small bowl, whisk the remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil, 1 teaspoon sesame oil, cilantro, miso, honey, sambal oelek, orange zest, ginger, and garlic. Pour the mixture over the roasted vegetables and toss to coat. Remove the chiles (or leave them in for color but warn diners not to eat them). Serve immediately.

## Garlic-Roasted Green Beans & Shallots with Hazelnuts

*Serves four.*

Chopped hazelnuts are a fine flavor match for green beans—and a refreshing departure from the more expected almonds.

- 6 medium shallots**
- 1 pound green beans, trimmed**
- 5 medium cloves garlic, coarsely chopped**
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt**
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**
- ¼ cup finely chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**
- ¼ cup coarsely chopped toasted hazelnuts**
- 1 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F.

Slice each shallot lengthwise into ¼-inch slices. Put the shallots, green beans, and garlic in a large bowl; toss with the oil. Sprinkle the salt and pepper over the vegetables and toss again. Transfer to a 10x15-inch Pyrex dish and roast until the vegetables are tender and very lightly browned, stirring once, 18 to 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, combine the parsley, hazelnuts, and lemon zest in a small bowl. Sprinkle the parsley mixture over the roasted vegetables and toss to coat. Serve immediately.



For the best browning, toss vegetables thoroughly in olive oil before roasting. For great flavor, add butter after roasting.



## Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Potatoes & Bacon

*Serves six.*

- 1½ pounds baby Yukon Gold potatoes, quartered (or halved if very small)**
- 1 pound Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved**
- 6 medium shallots, quartered**
- 3 slices thick-cut bacon, cut crosswise into ½-inch strips**
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt**
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted**
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 450°F.

Combine the potatoes, Brussels sprouts, shallots, and bacon in a large bowl;

toss with the oil. Sprinkle with the salt and pepper and toss again. Transfer the vegetables and bacon to a 10x15-inch Pyrex dish and roast, stirring every 15 minutes, until the vegetables are tender and well browned, 35 to 40 minutes total.

Combine the melted butter and lemon juice in a small bowl. Pour the butter mixture over the roasted vegetables and toss to coat. Serve immediately.

**Note:** If you can't find small potatoes, cut medium-size ones in half and then quarter each half so they're about the same size as the Brussels sprout halves.

*Julianne Grimes Bottcher, a food writer and recipe developer, owns Flavor Matters, Inc., a food consulting business. ♦*

# Maple Syrup

Sweet yet sassy, this pantry staple is more versatile than you think

BY SARAH JAY

There's probably a bottle of pure maple syrup in your refrigerator right now, awaiting your next batch of pancakes. But if that's all you're using it for, you're missing out. Maple syrup—and I'm talking about the real stuff, not Aunt Jemima—is like a hidden treasure in your fridge, with potential to add a golden touch to everything from roast chicken to whipped cream.

**In savory dishes**, maple syrup adds an earthy sweetness to sauces, marinades, vinaigrettes, and glazes. Its inimitable flavor pairs well with meats like pork and salmon, peppery spices like ginger and cayenne, and condiments like mustard, vinegar, and soy sauce.

**In sweets and pastries**, maple is a natural. As a maple syrup addict, I may be biased, but I think it makes pretty much any dessert better, whether it's cheesecake, crême brûlée, or scones.

## Grade B is for best

Maple syrup comes in various shades of amber, and these color gradations correlate directly to flavor. The darker the syrup, the more pronounced its flavor. The official grading of syrup also relates to its color: It goes from fancy to grade A, grade B, and grade C, getting darker with the "lower" grades. I choose grade B as my staple syrup for its intense, almost caramelly flavor. It's not as widely available as the lighter grade A, however, so if you see it, buy it (for sources, see p. 78).

## Maple goes well with:

apples  
bacon  
cabbage  
duck  
garlic  
ginger  
herbs  
hot spices  
lemon  
mustard  
nuts  
pork  
rum  
salmon  
scallops  
shallots  
soy sauce  
spinach  
vinegar  
warm spices





## Pork Chops with Maple-Ginger Pan Sauce

Serves two.

This is a good way to cook very thin pork chops without drying them out.

**4 thin (½-inch) boneless center-cut pork chops**  
**¼ cup all-purpose flour**  
**¾ cup homemade or low-salt chicken broth or water**  
**2 tablespoons dark rum**  
**1 tablespoon pure maple syrup, preferably grade B**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**2 tablespoons olive oil; more if needed**  
**1 tablespoon minced fresh ginger**  
**1 medium clove garlic, finely chopped**  
**1½ tablespoons unsalted butter**  
**1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh cilantro**  
**½ tablespoon finely chopped fresh mint**

Rinse the pork chops and pat them dry. Put the flour on a plate. Combine the broth or water, rum, and maple syrup in a measuring cup or small bowl; set aside. Generously season the pork chops on both sides with salt and pepper. Dredge the chops in the flour and shake off the excess.

Heat a large (10- or 12-inch) skillet on medium-high heat for 1 minute. Add the olive oil, and when it's hot, set the chops in the pan (if they won't fit without crowding, cook them in batches). Cook until one side is light golden, about 2 minutes. Turn the pieces and cook until the other side is light golden and the meat is cooked through but still moist, another 1 to 2 minutes. (Because the meat is so thin, it can't get more than light golden on each side without becoming overcooked and dry.) Transfer the

chops to a plate and repeat with the remaining chops, if necessary.

Add the ginger and garlic to the pan and stir constantly until they begin to turn golden, 5 to 10 seconds, and then immediately add the maple-rum mixture to the pan. Use a wooden spoon or spatula to scrape up the browned bits and help them dissolve. Boil until the sauce has reduced by about two-thirds and is nicely saucy, 3 to 4 minutes. Off the heat, add the butter, swirling the pan vigorously (or whisking) as it melts so it emulsifies the sauce. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Spoon the sauce over the pork and then sprinkle on the cilantro and mint. Serve right away.

## Savory ways with maple

**Maple chicken.** Brush maple syrup (straight or diluted) on a chicken as it roasts for delicious skin and drippings.

**Dijon-maple vinaigrette.** For a twist on honey mustard dressing, whisk 2 teaspoons grade B maple syrup, 2 tablespoons cider vinegar, 4 teaspoons Dijon mustard, 6 tablespoons olive oil, minced shallots, and fresh thyme.

**Maple lemonade or iced tea.** Instead of sugar, stir maple syrup into lemonade or iced tea.

**Asiany marinade.** Whisk maple syrup, soy sauce, rice vinegar, garlic, and fresh or ground ginger and marinate pork or salmon before grilling or roasting.

**Lemony maple vinaigrette.** Whisk lemon juice, fresh ginger, maple syrup, lemon zest, and olive oil for a light, refreshing salad dressing.

**Maple stuffed figs.** Blend maple syrup and a generous grinding of black pepper into fresh goat cheese. Stuff into halved fresh or dried figs and garnish with thyme.

**Puréed sweet potatoes or squash.** A drizzle of maple syrup added at the end of puréeing highlights their natural sweetness.

**Mapled nuts.** Heat maple syrup with cumin, coriander, nutmeg, cayenne, and butter. Add walnuts or pecans, toss, and bake on a baking sheet until aromatic and toasted.

**Rosemary-infused maple syrup.** Heat the syrup with a few fresh rosemary sprigs until simmering, turn off the heat, and let steep for 30 minutes. Use in marinades and vinaigrettes.

# Sweet

## Make dessert more mapley

**Maple whipped cream.** Add 2 tablespoons grade B maple syrup to 1 cup heavy cream and whip until stiff. Use to garnish pies, cakes, or ice cream.

**Maple French toast.** Add a splash of maple syrup to the egg-milk mixture for soaking bread. The maple flavor infuses the bread.

**Maple tarte Tatin.** Use slightly reduced maple syrup instead of caramel in the bottom of the pan. Boil the syrup until it's a shade darker, about 3 minutes, pour into a pie pan, add sautéed apples, and cover with pie dough. Bake and then turn out.

**Maple ice cream.** Add grade B maple syrup to vanilla ice cream custard before freezing. Or even easier, just drizzle maple syrup over vanilla ice cream.

**Maple icing.** Beat maple syrup into classic buttercream frosting or a quick icing made with confectioners' sugar and butter.

**Maple crème brûlée.** Add a few teaspoons of grade B maple syrup to crème brûlée custard before baking in a water bath.

**Sautéed maple apple slices.** Cook sliced apples in butter and maple syrup until golden and tender. Remove the apples and immediately add heavy cream to the pan, whisking to combine with the syrup. Serve over ice cream or pancakes.



### Storing tips

Once opened, maple syrup should be refrigerated. Glass containers maintain flavor better than plastic and metal. If mold develops, remove it, strain the syrup, and bring to a boil. Let cool and keep refrigerated. Maple syrup keeps indefinitely in the freezer.

### Maple Butter

*Yields 2 cups.*

Thanks to John Stockin of Lyonsville Sugarhouse in Accord, New York, for sharing his recipe. Spread this maple butter on scones or toast, stir into hot cereal, slather on pancakes, or just lick it off a spoon. Grade A medium works better in this recipe than darker syrups.

**½ pound unsalted butter, cut into chunks and frozen**  
**1½ cups grade A medium maple syrup**  
**¼ teaspoon kosher salt**

Test the accuracy of your candy thermometer by putting it in a small pot of boiling water. If it doesn't read exactly 212°F, factor in the difference in the next step.

Set the frozen chunks of butter beside the stove. Put the syrup in a 3-quart or larger stainless-steel saucepan and rub the inside rim with a bit

of butter to prevent boilovers. Boil the syrup over medium heat without stirring until a candy thermometer registers 234°F (or the recalculated temperature, if your thermometer is off), 8 to 10 minutes once the syrup boils; tilt the pan so the syrup covers the thermometer bulb to get an accurate reading.

Take the pot off the heat and add the butter and salt, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon until the butter melts completely. Pour the syrup into the bowl of a stand mixer. Beat with the paddle attachment on medium-high speed until it's cool, lighter in color, and creamy, 5 to 10 minutes. Pour the maple butter into jars or plastic containers, seal, and refrigerate. It will thicken as it cools and might get a little grainy. It lasts in the fridge or freezer as long as plain butter.

*Sarah Jay is the managing editor of Fine Cooking.* ♦

# Red Potatoes, 5 Ways

BY EVA KATZ

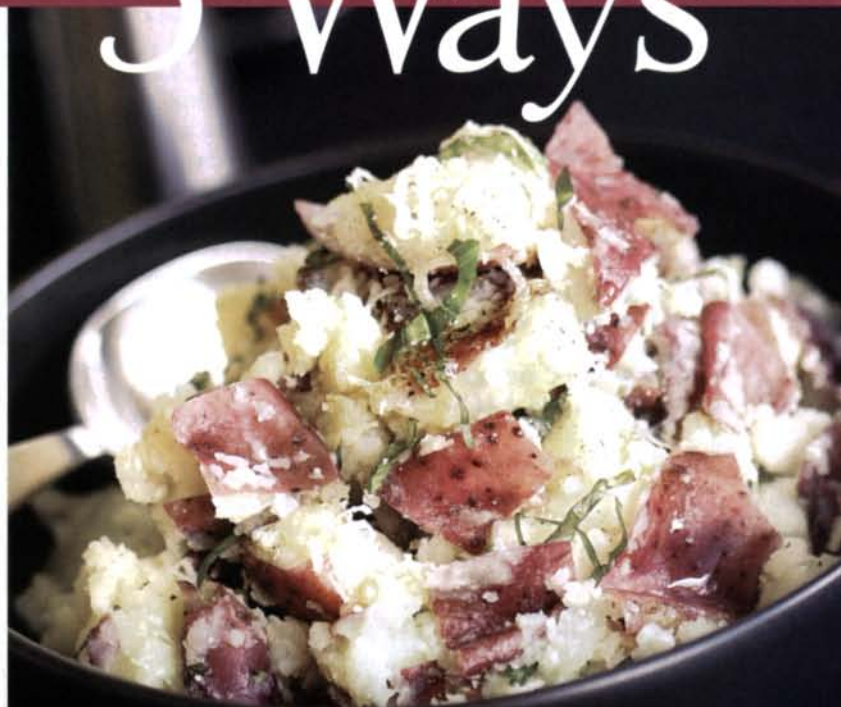
**R**ed potatoes are perhaps the only vegetable I would be content to cook and eat every night of the week. They're incredibly versatile, suited to just about any preparation. Their rich, earthy flavor can be satisfying by itself, but it also welcomes an amazing array of flavors. There's really no limit to what you can do with red potatoes, yet it's easy to always fall back on the same basic recipes. A few gutsy ingredient choices and maybe a change in how you cut the potatoes are all it takes to enliven your repertoire. I've gotten the ball rolling for you with the following five simple and fresh-tasting recipes.

## Good for roasting, pan-frying, and smashing

High in moisture and low in starch, red potatoes hold their shape well when cooked. That makes them a good candidate for roasting and skillet cooking. They also absorb liquids well, which is why I sometimes add a dash of vinegar or lemon juice to the potatoes to infuse them with extra flavor notes.

**Choose the right size potato for the job.** The smallest of the red potatoes, called creamer potatoes, are about the size of golf balls or even smaller. They're usually sold in small bags and may be labeled as new potatoes (see p. 67 for an explanation of terms). I like these little potatoes, but they can be pricey so I save them for recipes where their size really matters, such as Gratinéed Red Potatoes with Chives on p. 52 or the Roasted Potatoes with Onions & Thyme on p. 53. Medium and large red potatoes are often of the variety known as Red Bliss. They're the size of baseballs or tennis balls. I use these larger sizes interchangeably, especially in dishes where the potatoes are sliced, such as in gratins, or broken up, as in smashed potatoes.

**No peeling necessary.** An advantage that red potatoes have over other varieties is that their skins are thin and tender and don't require peeling, even in gratins and mashed potato recipes. The skins add color, nutrients, fiber, and much of the potatoes' earthy flavor. And then there's the time-saving factor of not having to peel a half dozen or so potatoes. Need I say more?



## Smashed Red Potatoes with Basil & Parmesan

*Serves four.*

**2 pounds medium or large red potatoes (about 5 medium), scrubbed and cut into large chunks, 1½ to 2 inches**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**¼ cup olive oil**  
**2 cloves garlic, minced**  
**¼ cup finely chopped fresh basil leaves**  
**¾ cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano**

Put the potatoes and 1 teaspoon salt in a large saucepan or pot and fill with enough cold water to cover the potatoes by about 1 inch. Bring to a boil over high heat. Lower the heat to maintain a steady simmer, cover the pot partially, and cook until the potatoes

are quite tender when tested with a fork, 15 to 20 minutes. Reserve some of the cooking water and then drain the potatoes. Dump them back in the pot and set over medium heat. Dry the potatoes by shaking the pan and stirring until most of the moisture has steamed off, about 2 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat. Using the side of a large metal spoon, cut through the skins and flesh of the potatoes, reducing the chunks to a very coarse mash. Stir in the olive oil and garlic. Add up to a couple of tablespoons of the cooking water to loosen the mash if necessary. Stir in the basil and cheese. Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve immediately.

## Pan-Fried Red Potatoes with Pancetta & Rosemary

*Serves four.*

**3 ounces pancetta, thinly sliced**  
**2 tablespoons olive oil**  
**1 pound medium to large red potatoes (2 to 3 medium), scrubbed and cut into 1-inch wedges (measured at the widest point)**  
**2 medium cloves garlic, minced**  
**1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice**  
**2 teaspoons minced fresh rosemary**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

Put the pancetta and oil in a 12-inch heavy-based skillet over medium heat and cook, stirring frequently, until the pancetta is crisp, 6 to 8 minutes. With tongs, transfer the pancetta to a plate. Add the potatoes to the skillet and spread them into a single layer so a cut side faces down. Cook until the potatoes are golden brown on the bottom

(the pan should sizzle but not smoke; adjust the heat if necessary), 5 to 8 minutes. Turn the potatoes with tongs so the other cut side faces down. Cook until that side is deep golden brown, another 5 to 8 minutes. Reduce the heat to medium low and cover tightly with a lid. Cook, tossing occasionally, until the potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork, 10 to 15 minutes more. If the potatoes are browning too much, reduce the heat to low.

While the potatoes cook, combine the garlic, lemon juice, and rosemary in a small bowl. When the potatoes are tender, add the garlic mixture, stirring to distribute it gently. Cook uncovered until the garlic mixture is heated through and fragrant, about 1 minute. Crumble the pancetta over the potatoes. Season to taste with salt and pepper and serve immediately.



Red potatoes are low in starch, so they hold their shape well.



## Gratinéed Red Potatoes with Chives

*Serves four.*

**1 pound small new red potatoes (about 10), scrubbed**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**3 tablespoons olive oil**  
**½ cup freshly grated Parmigiano Reggiano**  
**1 tablespoon thinly sliced fresh chives**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 425°F.

Put the potatoes in a saucepan and add enough cold water to cover by 1 inch. Add 1 teaspoon salt. Bring the potatoes to a boil over high heat and then lower the heat to maintain a gentle simmer. Cook until the potatoes are tender when pierced

with a fork, 15 to 20 minutes. Drain the potatoes and let them cool slightly.

Oil the bottom of an 8-inch square pan (I like Pyrex) with 1 tablespoon of the oil. Put the potatoes in the pan. Pierce each potato with the tines of a fork, twisting the fork slightly to break the skin a bit. Then gently squeeze the sides of each potato to make it pop open slightly (as you would for a baked potato). Season the potatoes generously with salt and pepper. Drizzle the remaining 2 tablespoons oil over the potatoes and sprinkle with the cheese. Roast until the potatoes are golden brown and crisp, 25 to 30 minutes. Sprinkle with the chives and serve immediately.

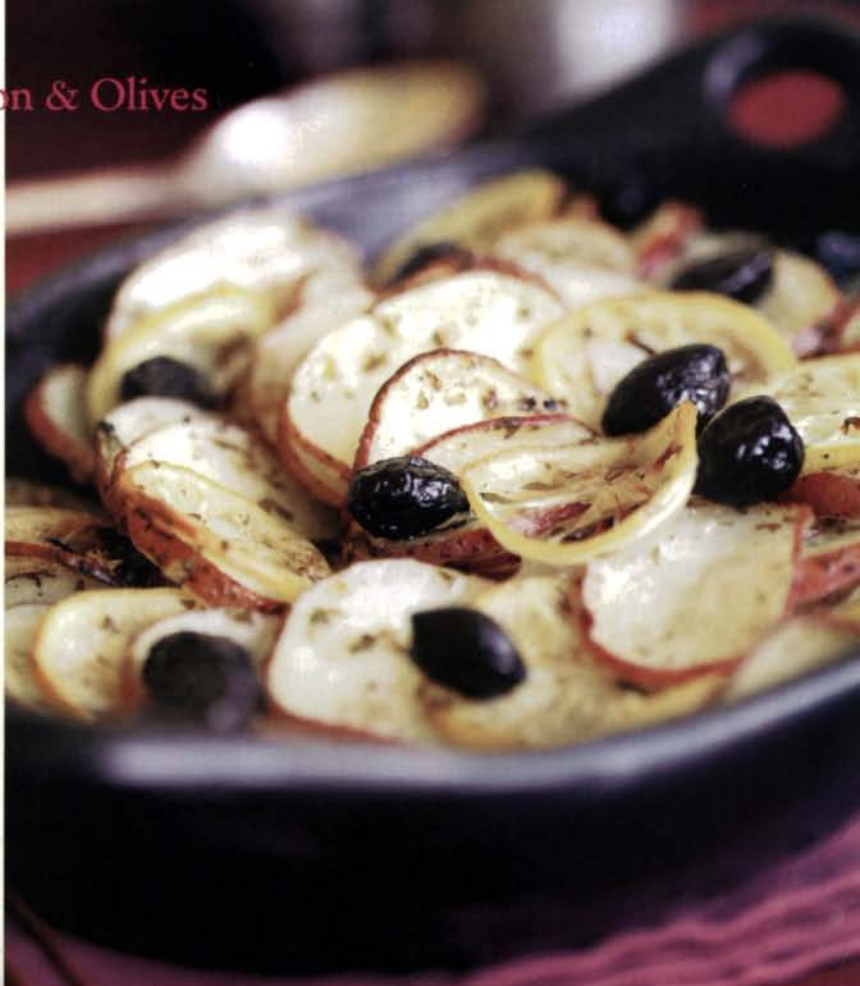
## Red Potato Slices Roasted with Lemon & Olives

*Serves six.*

- 2 pounds medium or large red potatoes (about 5 medium), scrubbed and sliced ¼ inch thick**
- 3 tablespoons olive oil; more for the pan**
- 1 lemon, very thinly sliced (discard the ends and seeds)**
- 2 cloves garlic, minced**
- ¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**
- 1½ teaspoons kosher salt**
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper**
- ½ cup pitted oil-cured olives (optional)**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 425°F.

Generously oil a large baking dish (9x13-inch works well, or use an oval gratin dish). In a large bowl, combine the potatoes, the 3 tablespoons oil, lemon slices, garlic, parsley, salt, and pepper; toss well. Spread the potato mixture in the baking dish so the potatoes are evenly layered (it can be rustic looking). Roast, turning the potatoes with a spatula every 20 minutes, until most of the potatoes are crisp and golden and the lemon skins are shriveled and caramelized, about 1 hour. Scatter the olives, if using, over the potatoes for the last 3 to 5 minutes of cooking.



Rich and earthy, red potatoes welcome many flavors.

## Red Potatoes Roasted with Onions, Thyme & Sherry Vinegar

*Serves six.*

- 2 small red onions**
- 2 pounds very small red potatoes (about 20), scrubbed and cut in half**
- 3 tablespoons olive oil**
- 3 tablespoons sherry vinegar**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper**
- 3 tablespoons fresh thyme leaves (from about 1 bunch)**

Position a rack in the center of the oven. Heat the oven to 425°F.

Trim the root ends of the onions, leaving enough of the core intact to hold the onion wedges together. Trim the other end of the onions and cut the onions in half vertically. Cut each half into four wedges, about 1 inch wide.

In a medium bowl, combine the onions, potatoes, olive oil, and sherry vinegar and season with salt and pepper. Toss to coat well. Spread the vegetables and any liquid in the bowl on a large heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet in a single layer, making sure that the potatoes are all cut side down. Roast until the cut sides of the potatoes are crusty and golden brown, about 35 minutes. Turn the potatoes and onions using a metal spatula. Sprinkle the thyme leaves over the potatoes and return the pan to the oven and roast until the potatoes are tender and the onions are very brown, about another 5 minutes. Taste and season with more salt if needed.



*Eva Katz is a recipe developer and food writer who lives in Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts. ♦*

# Spinach Salad Gets

BY ELIZABETH KARMEL

**Y**ears ago, I became infatuated with spinach salad, ordering it nearly every time I went out to lunch with my friends. Like most infatuations, my fling with spinach salad followed a predictable trajectory. At first I couldn't get enough of the salad; then suddenly, for no particular reason, its flavors ceased to tickle my palate, and soon after that, I started noticing the salad's flaws. The thick, tough spinach leaves, the bland hard-cooked egg, the underwhelming bacon dressing.

At that point, I suppose I could have abandoned the salad, but instead, I decided to reinvent it at home. I replaced the regular spinach with tender baby spinach and added whole leaves of fresh basil for a bright, fresh flavor. I replaced the hard-boiled eggs with broiled grape tomatoes tossed with garlic and herbs. And to guarantee that my palate wouldn't get bored, I threw in an addictive surprise: spiced candied walnuts. (My recipe yields more than you need for the salad, so you'll have leftovers for snacking.)

To zip up the dressing, I let the hot, flavorful tomatoes bathe in the bacon dressing, which warms it further and adds another flavor dimension. Before serving the salad, I spoon in just enough warm bacon dressing to moisten the leaves, and I top the salad with the spicy-sweet walnuts, hot tomatoes, and crumbled bacon. Definitely not boring.

New flavors and textures perk up a classic salad



**Baby spinach and fresh basil.** At a glance, you might not notice that the salad contains both baby spinach and fresh basil leaves, so the herb's flavor comes as a delightful surprise.



**Broiled grape tomatoes.** Tossed in garlic and herbs and then broiled, these sweet tomatoes add warmth and several layers of flavor to the salad.



**Candied walnuts.** Can't stop eating them. A pinch of cayenne elevates these salty, sweet munchies into the addictive realm.

## Candied Walnuts

*Yields about 3 cups.*

**1/3 cup granulated sugar**  
**2 1/2 tablespoons brown sugar**  
**1/2 teaspoon kosher salt**  
**1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon**  
**Pinch cayenne**  
**1 large egg white, at room temperature**  
**1/2 pound walnut halves**

Heat the oven to 300°F. In a small bowl, mix both sugars with the salt, cinnamon, and cayenne. In a large bowl, whisk the egg white until frothy; whisk in 1 tablespoon water until combined. Add the walnuts and stir to coat. Sprinkle on the sugar mixture and stir to evenly distribute.

Line a rimmed baking sheet with a nonstick baking mat or parchment. Spread the sugared nuts in a single

layer on the sheet. Bake for 15 minutes, stir the nuts, and continue baking until the nuts smell toasted and the sugar coating is caramelized, about another 15 minutes.

Let the nuts cool on the pan, separating them as they cool. When completely cool, transfer them to an airtight container. They'll keep for two weeks.

# a Flavor Makeover

## **Spinach & Basil Salad with Tomatoes, Candied Walnuts & Warm Bacon Dressing**

*Serves four.*

**8 ounces (5½ lightly packed cups) baby spinach leaves, washed and dried**  
**1 cup lightly packed fresh basil leaves, washed and dried**  
**6 slices bacon**  
**2 tablespoons white-wine vinegar**  
**1 tablespoon Dijon mustard**  
**⅓ cup plus 2 teaspoons olive oil**  
**Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**1 pint grape tomatoes, washed and dried**  
**1½ teaspoons dried herbes de Provence**  
**½ teaspoon dehydrated minced or granulated garlic (for sources, see p. 79)**  
**½ teaspoon kosher salt**  
**Candied Walnuts (at left)**

In a large salad bowl, toss the spinach and basil. Cut each slice of bacon into thirds. Cook in a medium skillet over medium to medium-high heat, stirring occasionally, until crisp; drain on paper towels. Reserve 1 tablespoon of the bacon fat. Crumble the bacon into pieces.

In a medium metal bowl, whisk the vinegar with the mustard. Slowly whisk in ⅓ cup of the oil and then whisk in the 1 tablespoon bacon fat. Season to taste with sea salt and pepper. Set aside in a warm place.

Position an oven rack as close as possible to the broiler element. Put a heavy-duty rimmed baking sheet on the rack and heat the broiler to high. Toss the tomatoes with the remaining 2 teaspoons olive oil, the herbes de Provence, dehydrated garlic, and kosher salt. Pour the tomatoes onto the hot pan and broil, stirring occasionally, until the skins are cracked and blistered and the flesh is warmed through, 4 to 5 minutes. Turn off the broiler. Transfer the tomatoes with a slotted spoon to the bowl with the salad dressing. Stir to coat and mix the seasonings into the dressing. Put the bowl in the oven to keep warm until ready to serve.

Just before serving, transfer the tomatoes from the dressing to another bowl with a slotted spoon. Whisk the dressing to recombine. Add half of the bacon to the greens. Drizzle the greens with 3 tablespoons of the dressing and toss lightly to coat. Add more dressing only if needed; don't overdress the salad. Mound the greens on four salad plates. Garnish with the tomatoes, the remaining bacon, and some of the candied walnuts (you'll have leftovers for snacking). Serve immediately.

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*Elizabeth Karmel is the author of the forthcoming book, Taming the Flame: Secrets to Hot and Quick Grilling and Low and Slow Barbecue. ♦*



# Spice Up Your Cooking

Create extraordinary new flavors with seasonings you already know (and a few you should get to know better)

BY FLOYD CARDOZ

**M**y cooking at Tabla restaurant in New York City is all about infusing familiar American ingredients with the aromatic flavors of India, where I grew up. There's nothing exotic about the main ingredients I use—most of them come from the farmers' market near the restaurant. What makes my food unique is the way I use spices.

It's easy to add new seasonings to your repertoire, but with so many interesting spices from which to choose, it can be hard to know where to begin. Well, I'll tell you a secret: You don't have to overhaul your pantry to get started. You only need a handful of spices and a few simple techniques for

extracting their flavors to surprise and delight your palate.

No country uses a wider range of spices than India, so it makes sense to look to India when you want to learn to use spices subtly and skillfully. I'll introduce you to the spices you need to try out Indian flavors, show you how to work with them, and teach you how to incorporate new spices into your cooking (see the sidebar on p. 59). The spices and techniques you'll learn about here don't just apply to Indian food. Cooks the world over rely on spices like ginger, cinnamon, fennel, pepper, bay leaf, and chiles; they just use the spices in different amounts and combinations.

Look to India  
when you want  
to learn how to  
use spices.



## Helping spices release their flavor

Spices are naturally fragrant, but to reach their full flavor potential, they need our help. Cracking and grinding spices (see p. 58) is part of the equation. But it's heat that really wakes up those aromatic oils. Toasting (dry heat) and blooming in oil (moist heat) are classic techniques.



### Toasting whole spices

When you toast spices, moisture cooks off and the spice takes on a warm, smoky, earthy flavor that can be totally different from the character of the raw spice. Raw coriander, for example, has a very citrusy aroma, but when toasted it becomes almost nutty.

**Toast first, grind later.** Raw ground spices are quick to burn, so always toast spices whole and then grind them. And only toast one kind of spice at a time: If you toast a mixture of whole spices, some will burn before the others are even close to being done.

#### How to toast whole spices:

Heat a dry sauté pan over medium heat. When the pan is very warm, add the whole spice. Shake the pan to keep the spice moving and to control browning. After toasting, immediately remove the spice from the pan to stop the cooking. When cool, grind the spice and add it to your dish toward the end of cooking or right before serving. You can try this technique in the Peppery Pink Lentil Soup on p. 60.



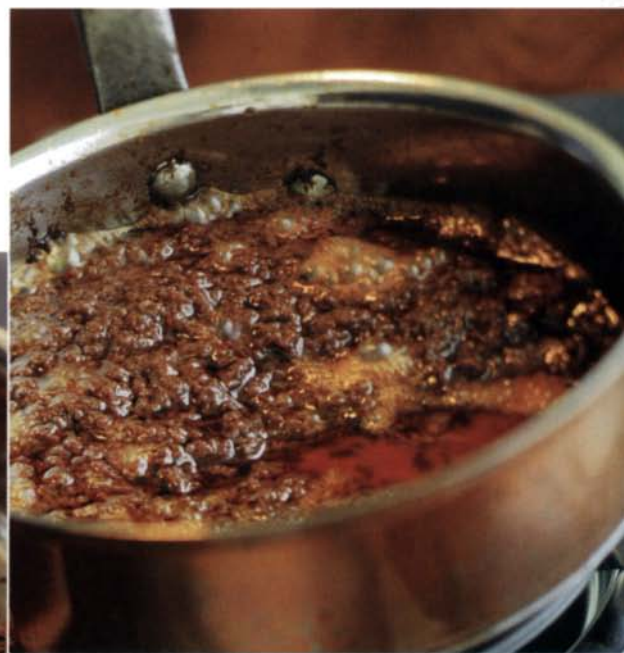
### Blooming whole spices

Blooming a spice in oil is a bit like sautéing a vegetable: It's quick, and the resulting flavor is bright. The combination of heat and oil quickly extracts aromatic compounds from a spice.

#### How to bloom whole spices:

Heat the oil over medium heat until it's hot but not smoking. Add the whole spices and cook until very fragrant and little bubbles form around the spices. Don't let them brown. You can then add other ingredients to the hot pan and proceed with your recipe.

(If you bloom large spices like cardamom pods, cloves, or cinnamon sticks, be sure to remove them from the finished dish before serving because you don't want people to bite into them.) Try this technique in the recipe for Creamy Mashed Potatoes with Warm Spices on p. 60.



### Frying a paste of ground raw spices

I don't toast ground spices in a dry pan because they're very quick to burn. Instead, I bloom them in oil—but even then, I modify the technique because hot oil can also scorch ground spices.

#### How to bloom ground spices:

First, you need to mix them with a little of the liquid from your recipe—vinegar, water, stock, wine, whatever—to make a thick paste. The moisture in the spice paste helps keep the ground spices from burning when you put

the paste in the hot oil. Then you cook the paste until all the liquid evaporates. You can tell it's time to stop cooking when the oil starts to separate from the spices (as in the photo above). This is a classic Indian technique, and you can try it in my recipe for Six-Spice Braised Short Ribs on p. 61.

**Tools:** A flat metal or silicone spatula is best for cooking with spices; wooden spoons absorb spices' flavors.

### What is a tarka?

Small, whole, edible spices bloomed in hot oil and added to a dish at the end of cooking.

## Keeping spices fresh: how to buy and store

I always buy whole spices (with the exception of turmeric) and grind only what I need for a recipe because spices begin to deteriorate the instant they're ground. The most fragrant spices come from stores with a high rate of turnover. Many grocery stores have a good selection of spices, and if you live near an Indian or Middle Eastern market, check out its spice section, which may have more variety. You can also order by mail (see p. 78). Air, light, and heat are the enemies of spices, so keep them in airtight containers in a drawer or cupboard, but never over the stove.



### Grinding spices

Grinding releases a spice's flavorful aromatic oils. A coarser grind adds textural interest and a mosaic of flavors to a dish. (But not all spices should be left coarse: cinnamon, clove, mace, nutmeg, and green and black cardamom are so strongly flavored that biting into

**Tip:** Before grinding whole dried chiles or bay leaves, put them in a low oven for about 5 minutes to evaporate moisture and make them brittle.

a big piece is not pleasant.) Finer grinds tend to be more subtle, with the flavors more evenly blended.

A small electric coffee grinder (for sources, see p. 79) lets you

grind a few tablespoons of spice at a time. If you use a mortar and pestle, grind in a circular motion and hold a piece of plastic wrap over the bowl while you grind to keep the spices from sneaking out.

## How to build a spice pantry

With these nineteen spices, the flavor possibilities are endless. You don't have to run out and buy them all at once. Instead, start with the spices on the left (which you probably already know) and some from the middle section (which I hope you'll get to know). And as your taste for adventure grows, work your way toward the group on the right; they're a little harder to use—but ultimately worth the effort.

### Start with spices you know

These familiar, versatile spices know no boundaries. They season everything from Italian sausage to gingerbread, and they're also integral to Indian cuisine.



black peppercorns

allspice

bay leaves

cinnamon sticks

whole nutmeg

whole cloves \*

### Add these versatile spices

These tasty, easy-to-use spices lie at the heart of Indian cooking. Alone or in combination, they taste good with almost any main ingredient. Try them with confidence—you can't go wrong.



cumin seeds  
nutty flavor

coriander seeds  
sweet, lemony

yellow or brown mustard seeds  
warm, pungent

fennel seeds  
sweet, minty, licoricey

ground turmeric  
mildly bitter, earthy,  
pungent

## Venture off the beaten path

Once you're at ease with more accessible spices, try some of these unique spices. Their assertive flavors don't go well with quite as many foods and can easily overpower a dish—so use them judiciously.

whole dried chiles \*  
fruity and spicy

black cardamom pods \*  
intensely smoky, peppery

nigella seeds  
mildly bitter, dry,  
oniony

black cumin seeds  
grassy, sweet

dried ginger \*  
lemony, peppery bite

fenugreek leaves  
grassy, peanutty

fenugreek seeds  
nutty, butterscotchy, bitter

green or white cardamom pods \*  
camphor aroma; minty sweet

\* Easy does it. These potent spices can overwhelm a dish, so use just a little.

## How to experiment with spices

I use spices differently from recipe to recipe, even within recipes. For example, I wanted the lentil soup on p. 60 to taste earthy and warm, so I used toasted spices, and I finished it with a tarka to add texture. Here's how to experiment with spices on your own:

### 1. Choose a versatile spice.

Cumin is a good spice to begin with as you experiment with spice combinations. It's great with both coriander and mustard seed. The trio of cumin, coriander, and mustard seed works with any kind of meat, fish, or vegetable. Fennel seed is another friendly spice; you can add a little to almost anything.

**2. Use a new spice (or spices) to season a familiar dish.** It's easier to like a new flavor if you already like most of the ingredients that go into a dish.

If you toast spices, add them to the dish toward the end of cooking or sprinkle them on the food right before serving, because the toasting process has already released the spices' aromatic oils.

Soups, stews, and braises are great for experimenting with bloomed spices. Just add spices to your cooking oil at the start of a recipe, before you add your aromatics. Or pour in a tarka (see p. 57) as a finishing touch.

**3. Finally, be judicious.** Some spices will ruin a dish if you use too much. It's better for a dish to be underspiced than overspiced. If you find you like the flavor of a new spice, you can always use more next time.

## Spice up plain rice

Add 6 whole cardamom pods per 2 cups raw rice at the start of cooking. Remove the pods before serving the rice. Try it with other spices.



Warm toasted spices and a flavor-packed tarka come together in this velvety soup.

### Peppery Pink Lentil Soup

*Serves eight to ten; yields 10 to 11 cups.*

#### FOR THE SOUP:

- ½ tablespoon coriander seeds**
- ¾ teaspoon whole black peppercorns**
- 1½ cups pink lentils (also known as red lentils or masoor dal), picked over and thoroughly washed**
- 1 medium white onion, cut into ½-inch dice (about 2 cups)**
- 2 ribs celery, cut into ½-inch dice (about 1 cup)**
- 1 medium carrot, peeled and cut into ½-inch dice (about ½ cup)**
- 3 cloves garlic, thinly sliced**
- 1-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and coarsely chopped**
- ½ fresh serrano chile, thinly sliced (don't remove seeds)**
- 15 sprigs fresh cilantro, left whole and tied in a cheesecloth pouch**
- Kosher or sea salt**
- 1 cup plain yogurt, whisked until smooth, for garnish**
- 2 tablespoons sliced fresh chives for garnish**

#### FOR THE TARKA:

- 2 tablespoons canola oil**
- 1 teaspoon mustard seeds**
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds**

**Make the soup:** Heat a small, dry sauté pan over medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, add the coriander seeds and toast them—stir constantly (or shake the pan gently) to keep the seeds from burning—until they darken slightly and become very fragrant, 1 to 2 minutes. Immediately transfer them to a dish and set aside. Return the sauté pan

to the heat; add the peppercorns and toast, shaking the pan, for about 2 minutes. Pour onto the plate with the coriander seeds. Put the toasted coriander and pepper in a spice grinder or mortar and pestle and grind to a fine powder.

In a large (at least 4-quart) saucepan, combine the lentils, onion, celery, carrot, garlic, ginger, chile, cheesecloth-wrapped cilantro sprigs, and 2 teaspoons salt with 2½ quarts water. Bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat to medium low and simmer for 30 minutes. Remove the cilantro sprigs. Add the ground coriander and pepper to the soup and simmer for another 10 minutes. Purée the soup using a hand blender or a regular blender until the soup is very smooth. Strain the purée through a medium sieve into a large serving bowl. The soup can be made to this point one day ahead; reheat it gently before continuing.

#### Make the tarka and garnish the soup:

Set a small deep saucepan over medium heat and add the canola oil. When the oil is shimmering, add the mustard seeds and cook, uncovered, until they pop, 30 to 60 seconds. Add the cumin seeds and cook for another 1 minute. Quickly but carefully, pour the hot tarka over the soup and mix well. Season with salt to taste. Ladle the soup into individual serving bowls and garnish with a dollop of yogurt and a sprinkling of the chives.



Whole spices bloomed in oil and a spice paste add layers of flavor.

### Creamy Mashed Potatoes with Warm Spices

*Serves six to eight; yields about 7 cups.*

- 2½ to 3 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes (about 4 large), peeled and quartered**
- Kosher salt**
- 1 tablespoon corn oil**
- 1½ teaspoons yellow split peas**
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds**
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter**
- 1 large white onion, cut into ¼-inch dice (about 2 cups)**
- ¼ teaspoon turmeric**
- 2 teaspoons honey**
- 1 teaspoon Coleman's mustard powder**
- ¾ cup whole milk; more if needed**
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream**
- Freshly ground black pepper**

Put the potatoes in a large saucepan, add cold water to cover by at least an inch, add 1 teaspoon salt, and bring the



water to a boil over high heat. Cover the pan, reduce the heat to medium to maintain a steady (not raging) boil, and cook until the potatoes are tender all the way through but don't fall apart when pierced with a fork, about 20 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat the corn oil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the split peas and cook just until they start to turn golden brown (watch carefully: split peas can quickly go from golden brown to dark brown to burned), about 3 minutes. Add the cumin seeds and cook, stirring, for 30 seconds. Add the butter, onion, and turmeric and cook until the onion is transparent, 4 to 5 minutes. In a small bowl, whisk the honey and mustard powder until smooth. Stir in the milk and cream and then add this mixture to the onions and spices. Re-

duce the heat to low and simmer for 5 minutes. Turn off the heat, cover the pan, and let it sit on the burner.

When the potatoes are tender, drain them and return them to their saucepan over medium heat. Dry the potatoes, shaking the pan and stirring with a rubber spatula, until they look floury and leave a light film on the bottom of the pan. Put the dry potatoes through a ricer or food mill, or mash them with a hand masher until they're lump-free.

Pour the hot creamy onion mixture into the pan with the warm mashed potatoes. Stir slowly with a wooden spoon to thoroughly combine. If the potatoes seem dry, moisten with a little more milk. Transfer the spiced mashed potatoes to a serving bowl. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve at once.

## Six-Spice Braised Short Ribs

*Serves six to eight.*

Serve the ribs and sauce over Creamy Mashed Potatoes with Warm Spices (see the recipe at left). A side of sautéed spinach or chard also pairs well.

- ½ cup peeled, sliced fresh ginger (¼ inch thick)**
- 8 large cloves garlic**
- ½ cup dry red wine**
- ¼ cup red-wine vinegar**
- 1½ tablespoons coriander seeds, finely ground**
- 1 tablespoon sweet Hungarian paprika**
- 1½ teaspoons cayenne**
- 1½ teaspoons ground dried ginger**
- 1½ teaspoons whole allspice, finely ground**
- ¾ teaspoon black peppercorns, finely ground**
- ¼ cup canola oil**
- ½ cup tomato ketchup**
- ¼ cup pure maple syrup**
- 2½ tablespoons fresh thyme leaves**
- 1 sprig fresh rosemary, leaves plucked from the stem and left whole (about 1 scant tablespoon)**
- 2 tablespoons kosher salt; more as needed**
- 6 pounds bone-in beef short ribs (3 to 4 inches long)**
- 2 quarts homemade or low-salt beef or chicken broth**
- ¼ cup coarsely chopped fresh cilantro leaves**

In a blender, grind the fresh ginger, garlic, wine, and vinegar to a smooth paste. Add the coriander, paprika, cayenne, ground dried ginger, allspice, and black pepper; blend just to combine.

To bloom the spices, heat the canola oil in a heavy-based medium saucepan over medium heat. When the oil is hot, carefully add the spice paste and cook, stirring constantly and carefully (the mixture will bubble and splatter), until the paste is thick, very aromatic, and the oil separates out of the paste, 5 to 8 minutes. Remove the pan

from the heat and let the spice paste cool.

When the spice paste is cool, stir in the ketchup, maple syrup, thyme, rosemary, and salt. Rub this paste over the ribs. Put the ribs in a nonreactive container, cover well, and refrigerate for at least one day and up to two days.

When ready to cook, put the ribs, the marinade, and the broth in a heavy-based 8-quart (or larger) pot over medium heat. Bring the liquid to a boil, reduce the heat to medium low or low, cover, and simmer until the meat is very tender when pierced with a fork, about 2½ hours. Uncover and simmer for another 15 minutes.

Remove the ribs from the liquid and transfer them to a 9x13-inch Pyrex dish or other similar container. Cover with foil. Use a ladle to skim the fat (there will be a lot) from the braising

liquid. Bring the liquid to a boil, lower the heat, and simmer gently, uncovered, until the liquid reduces to about 4 cups and becomes a slightly thick, velvety sauce, about 45 minutes. If

serving right away, return the ribs to the sauce to reheat briefly.

If making ahead, pour as much of the sauce over the ribs as will fit in the dish and pour the remaining sauce into another container. Let cool uncovered at room temperature for 1 hour and then cover and refrigerate until ready to serve, up to two days.

When ready to serve, reheat the ribs and sauce in a large pot over medium heat until the sauce is bubbling and the meat is warm all the way through. Taste the sauce and add salt if needed. Sprinkle with the cilantro and serve.

*Floyd Cardoz is the executive chef of Tabla in New York City. His first cookbook will be published later this year. ♦*

# Pudding Cakes

BY NICOLE REES



## Cake on top,

**A**s a pastry chef, I'm always on the lookout for a great new dessert. So when I recently discovered pudding cakes, I couldn't believe my luck. A pudding cake isn't just one yummy treat; it's two delicious desserts in one—tender cake on top and creamy custard on the bottom—but without the hassle of making two components.

Of course, just because pudding cakes are novel to me, it doesn't mean they're truly new. Like most great "new" desserts, pudding cakes are a rediscovered classic. Americans have been acquainted with these treats for at least 100 years: *The Original Boston Cooking School Cookbook* includes a recipe for lemon soufflé sponge. Cookbook author Richard Sax found "sponge puddings" dating from the 1880s. And James Beard called these desserts "cake puddings."

### How one batter separates into two distinct layers

If you've ever made a soufflé, you might think my pudding cake recipes look familiar. Traditional des-

#### Lemon Pudding Cakes

*Yields eight individual cakes.*

**Softened butter for the ramekins**

**2 ounces (¼ cup) unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly**

**1 cup granulated sugar**

**3 large eggs, separated, at room temperature**

**1½ ounces (¼ cup) unbleached all-purpose flour**

**¼ plus ⅛ teaspoon table salt**

**1¼ cups whole milk, at room temperature**

**⅓ cup fresh lemon juice, at room temperature**

**1 tablespoon finely grated lemon zest**

**Lightly sweetened whipped cream for serving (optional)**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Butter eight 6-ounce ceramic oven-proof ramekins or Pyrex custard cups and arrange them in a baking dish or roasting pan (a 10x15-inch or two 8x8-inch Pyrex dishes work well).

In a large bowl, whisk the melted butter with ⅔ cup of the sugar and the egg yolks until smooth and light, about 1 minute. Add the flour and salt and pour in just enough milk to whisk the flour smoothly into the egg yolk mixture. Then whisk in the remaining milk and the lemon juice until smooth.

# custard on the bottom

sert soufflés are made by combining whipped egg whites with a thick base that's usually precooked. By contrast, pudding cakes are made by stirring whipped egg whites into an extremely thin uncooked batter. So essentially, a pudding cake is a soufflé with too much liquid. The additional liquid allows the air bubbles from the whipped egg whites to move freely in the thin batter during baking. As these bubbles expand, they float to the top of the baking dish and create a spongy cake layer, while the starch and eggs cook slowly and set the batter. With the air bubbles moved to the top, the bottom layer thickens into rich custard.

And the great thing is, the cake does this all by itself, so you don't have to worry about a thing. Even the whipped egg whites in this recipe are foolproof because they contain sugar, which stabilizes the foam so it's nearly impossible to overbeat them. And baking the cakes in a water bath ensures that the tops won't crack and the custard won't curdle. (For more on how water baths work, see p. 66.)

Unlike soufflés, pudding cakes don't puff dramatically in the heat of the oven, so you can fill your ramekins almost to the rim with batter. It will rise only slightly during baking and sink back down as the dessert cools.

## A pudding cake needs time to chill

Although you can make pudding cakes in large ramekins and serve them family style, I prefer individual servings. Serving a small dish to each guest adds a special touch. And small portions also cook and cool faster, which is a good thing because although pudding cakes are good warm (about 30 minutes after they come out of the oven), they're even better cold. I highly recommend delaying gratification and refrigerating your pudding cakes for a few hours or overnight. The flavors will intensify, the custard will thicken—and, most importantly, the cake and pudding layers will be more distinct.

The mixture will be very fluid.

Put the egg whites in a large bowl. Beat with an electric mixer (a hand-held or a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment) on medium speed until the whites begin to foam, 30 to 60 seconds. Increase the speed to high and beat just until the whites hold soft peaks when the beater is pulled away, another 1 to 2 minutes. Reduce the mixer speed to medium. With the mixer running, very slowly sprinkle in the remaining  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup sugar; this should take about a minute. Stop the mixer and scrape the bowl.

Beat on high speed until the whites hold medium-firm peaks when the beater is pulled away, about another 30 seconds.

Scrape one-third of the egg whites onto the egg yolk mixture, sprinkle the lemon zest on top, and whisk until combined. Gently incorporate the remaining whites into the batter, using the whisk in a folding/stirring motion. The batter will still be thin.

Portion the mixture evenly among the ramekins; the cakes don't rise much, so you can fill the ramekins to within  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch of the top. Pull out the

oven rack and put the baking dish full of ramekins on the rack. Pour warm water into the dish to reach halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Bake until the tops of the cakes are light golden and slightly puffed, and when touched with a finger, they should feel spongy and spring back a bit but hold a shallow indentation, 25 to 30 minutes. Using tongs, carefully transfer the ramekins to a rack. Let cool to room temperature and then refrigerate for at least 2 hours and up to 24 hours before serving, with whipped cream if you like.

## reader review

We asked a *Fine Cooking* reader to give these recipes a real-world test before publication. Here's what she reported:

*"Wonderful! These pudding cakes were delightfully easy. They're elegant enough for guests but can be made ahead and refrigerated—a huge plus!"*

—Karen Ostler,  
Northridge, California

## The path to perfect pudding cakes



### Make a thin batter.

*After you mix the melted butter, sugar, egg yolks, flour, milk, and flavorings, you'll have a very thin batter that flows off a spoon like liquid. Don't worry. A liquid batter lets pudding cakes separate into two layers as they bake.*



### Whip the egg whites to medium-firm peaks.

*The peaks should curl over slightly and then hold their shape when the whip is pulled away from the whites.*



### Whisk the whipped whites into the batter.

*Use a stirring motion to incorporate one-third of the whites. Then, still using the whisk, quickly but gently fold in the rest. The batter will still be thin.*



### Mocha Pudding Cakes

*Yields eight individual cakes.*

#### Softened butter for the ramekins

**2 ounces (¼ cup) unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly**

**1 cup granulated sugar**

**3 large eggs, separated, at room temperature**

**⅓ cup unsweetened Dutch-processed cocoa**

**2 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour**

**¼ plus ⅛ teaspoon table salt**

**1¼ cups strong brewed coffee, at room temperature**

**⅓ cup whole milk, at room temperature**

**1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**

**Lightly sweetened whipped cream for serving (optional)**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Butter eight 6-ounce ovenproof ceramic ramekins or Pyrex custard cups and arrange them in a baking dish or roasting pan (a 10x15-inch or two 8x8-inch Pyrex dishes work well).

In a large bowl, whisk the melted butter with ⅔ cup of the sugar and the egg yolks until smooth and light, about 1 minute. Add the cocoa, flour, and salt and pour in just enough coffee to whisk the flour smoothly into the egg yolk mixture. Then whisk in the remaining coffee, along with the milk and vanilla, until smooth. The mixture will be very fluid.

Put the egg whites in a large bowl. Beat with an electric mixer (a hand-held or a stand mixer fitted with the whisk at-



*Wrap rubber bands around the ends of your tongs to get a better grip when lifting the ramekins out of the water bath.*

tachment) set at medium speed until the whites begin to foam, 30 to 60 seconds. Increase the speed to high and beat just until the egg whites hold soft peaks when the beater is pulled away from the whites, another 1 to 2 minutes. Reduce the mixer speed to medium. With the mixer running, very slowly sprinkle in the remaining  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup sugar; this should take about a minute. Stop the mixer and scrape the bowl. Beat on high speed until the whites hold medium-firm peaks when the beater is pulled away, about another 30 seconds.

Scrape one-third of the egg whites onto the egg yolk mixture and whisk until combined. Gently incorporate the remaining egg whites evenly into the batter, using the whisk

in a folding/stirring motion. The batter will still be thin.

Portion the mixture evenly among the ramekins; the cakes don't rise much, so you can fill the ramekins to within  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch of the top. Pull out the oven rack and put the baking dish full of ramekins on the rack. Pour warm water into the dish to reach halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Bake until the tops of the cakes are slightly puffed and, when touched with a finger, they feel spongy and spring back a bit but hold a very shallow indentation, 25 to 30 minutes. Using tongs, carefully transfer the ramekins to a rack. Let cool to room temperature and then refrigerate for at least 2 hours and up to 24 hours before serving, with whipped cream if you like.

## Butter-Rum Pudding Cakes

*Yields eight individual cakes.*

**Softened butter for the ramekins**  
**2 ounces ( $\frac{1}{4}$  cup) unsalted butter, melted and cooled slightly**  
 **$\frac{2}{3}$  cup packed dark brown sugar**  
**3 large eggs, separated, at room temperature**  
 **$1\frac{1}{2}$  ounces ( $\frac{1}{4}$  cup) unbleached all-purpose flour**  
 **$\frac{1}{4}$  plus  $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon table salt**  
 **$1\frac{1}{3}$  cups plus 1 tablespoon whole milk, at room temperature**  
**3 tablespoons good-quality light rum (this is an adult amount; reduce the rum to 2 tablespoons and increase the milk by 1 tablespoon for a kid-friendly version)**  
**1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract**  
 **$\frac{1}{4}$  cup granulated sugar**  
**Lightly sweetened whipped cream for serving (optional)**

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 350°F. Butter eight 6-ounce ceramic ovenproof ramekins or Pyrex custard cups and arrange them in a baking dish or roasting pan (a 10x15-inch or two 8x8-inch Pyrex dishes work well).

In a large bowl, whisk the melted butter with the brown sugar and egg yolks until smooth, about 1 minute. Add the flour and salt and pour in just enough milk to whisk the flour smoothly into the egg yolk mixture. Then whisk in the remaining milk, along with the rum and vanilla, until smooth. The mixture will be very fluid.

Put the egg whites in a large bowl. Beat with an electric mixer (a hand-held

or a stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment) at medium speed until the egg whites begin to foam, 30 to 60 seconds. Increase the speed to high and beat just until the egg whites hold soft peaks when the beater is pulled away from the whites, another 1 to 2 minutes. Reduce the mixer speed to medium. With the mixer running, very slowly sprinkle in the granulated sugar; this should take about a minute. Stop the mixer and scrape the bowl. Beat on high speed until the whites hold medium-firm peaks when the beater is pulled away, about another 30 seconds.

Scrape one-third of the egg whites onto the egg yolk mixture and whisk until combined. Gently incorporate the remaining egg whites evenly into the batter, using the whisk in a folding/stirring motion. The batter will still be thin.

Portion the mixture evenly among the ramekins; the cakes don't rise much, so you can fill the ramekins to within  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch of the top. Pull out the oven rack and put the baking dish full of ramekins on the rack. Pour warm water into the dish to reach halfway up the sides of the ramekins. Bake until the tops of the cakes are light golden and slightly puffed and, when touched with a finger, they should feel spongy and spring back a bit but hold a shallow indentation, 25 to 30 minutes. Using tongs, carefully transfer the ramekins from the water bath to a rack. Let cool to room temperature and then refrigerate for at least 2 hours and up to 24 hours before serving, with whipped cream if you like.

*Nicole Rees, co-author of Understanding Baking, is a pastry chef and baking-science expert. She lives in Portland, Oregon. ♦*

BY JENNIFER ARMENTROUT

## Sometimes patterns emerge without warning in the test kitchen.

We'll go for months without needing something like hazelnuts or fresh tarragon for recipe testing, and then suddenly we'll get several recipes calling for the same infrequently used ingredient. It's strange. Take this edition of *From Our Test Kitchen*, for example. We had already decided to do a tasting of soy sauces when we received a recipe that called for miso, prompting us to include a profile of this soy-based ingredient along with a miso soup recipe that calls for tofu, yet another soy product. Yikes! This isn't the all-soy edition, though. You'll find plenty of other interesting information, like the science behind baking in a water bath, and how to carve a roasted chicken. Plus, we'll answer the question that's surely been burning in everyone's mind: Just what the heck is hominy anyway?

### vegetable prep

## How to trim Brussels sprouts

There isn't much to trimming Brussels sprouts, especially if you think of them as tiny cabbages with edible cores.

**1** Trim the base of the core to expose a fresh surface.



**2** Peel off and discard the outer layer of leaves, or more if necessary due to insect damage. Rinse the sprouts well.



**3** If cooking the sprouts whole, score an X in the base of the core. Heat will penetrate the core so the sprouts cook evenly.



## Why bake custards in a water bath?

Baking in a water bath may seem like an unnecessary step, but this easy cooking method is your best insurance against curdled custards and cracked cheesecakes. These desserts are thickened primarily by egg proteins, which set well below 212°F. Unless these proteins are protected from the high heat of the oven, they'll overcook and tighten or shrink, causing your custard to crack or separate into curdled egg and liquid. A water bath insulates custards from the direct heat of the oven because the water can't exceed 212°F, unlike the air in a 350°F oven. Without a water bath, the outside of your dessert would overcook before the center is done. And direct heat could take small custards, like the pudding cakes on pp. 62-65, from cooked to cracked within a minute. But if they're in a water bath, you have more time to catch them at the perfect degree of doneness.

—Nicole Rees, co-author of *Understanding Baking*



## Worry-free eggs— raw pasteurized eggs in the shells

If concerns about salmonella in uncooked eggs have turned you off from foods like Caesar dressing (recipe below) and eggs sunny side up, then here's some good news for you: Whole pasteurized eggs in the shell are available in many supermarkets nationwide. After undergoing a process that involves bathing the eggs in warm water (that's not hot enough to cook them) for specific time periods, these raw eggs are as safe as pasteurized milk, according to the processor. Except for a slight opacity in the whites, the eggs are practically indistinguishable in appearance and flavor from unpasteurized eggs. Look for them in the fresh egg section of your market under

the brand names Davidson's or Safeway Select. If your store doesn't carry them, you can ask them to. For more information and to order five dozen or more, visit [www.safeeggs.com](http://www.safeeggs.com). —J. A.

### Caesar Dressing

*Yields about 1/2 cup.*

If you don't have a large mortar, mince and mash the garlic and anchovies on a cutting board, and then put them in a bowl to finish the recipe.

- 2 small cloves garlic**
- Kosher salt**
- 4 oil-packed anchovy fillets, rinsed and patted dry**
- 1 egg yolk, preferably pasteurized\***
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard**
- 4 teaspoons fresh lemon juice**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- Dash of Tabasco or other hot sauce**
- Scant 1/4 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce**
- 1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil**

Put the garlic and a pinch of kosher salt in a large (3- to 4-cup) mortar. Using a pestle, pound the garlic into a creamy, juicy paste. Add the anchovies, mashing until they're broken down into bits. Add the yolk, working the mixture into a paste. Work in the mustard and then the lemon juice. Blend in a pinch of black pepper, the Tabasco, and the Worcestershire. Switch to a whisk and drizzle in the olive oil, whisk-



*A pasteurized egg yolk makes thick homemade Caesar dressing completely safe to eat.*

ing continuously, until blended and creamy. Taste and add more salt and pepper, if necessary.

—Ana Sortun,  
*Fine Cooking* #46

\*Note: If you're serving this dressing to anyone with a compromised immune system and you can't get a pasteurized egg yolk, omit the yolk.

## new potato or not?

Red potatoes, especially small ones, are often labeled in the supermarket as "new potatoes" but chances are they aren't new potatoes at all. Technically, a new potato is harvested from the potato vines while the leaves are still green. At this stage, the immature potatoes are thin-skinned and haven't developed their full complement of starch. So regardless of their variety, new potatoes are low in starch and high in moisture, even if they're actually a high-starch variety. Since mature red potatoes and new potatoes are both low starch, they can be used interchangeably and, subsequently, the term "new potato" is used quite loosely. (For more on starch and potatoes, see p. 76.)

—Eva Katz, contributor

ingredient

# Miso

Once enjoyed by only the emperors and shogun of Japan, miso now appears in some form at nearly every Japanese meal. The salty, savory flavors of miso—fermented soybean paste—are essential to numerous dishes like soups, dressings, glazes, and pickles.

Making miso is still a revered art, and the flavors, textures, and aromas of different varieties are judged much like fine wine. After steaming and crushing soybeans, traditional miso houses add sea salt and *koji*, a culture made from grains like rice and barley that triggers fermentation. The best miso are aged in wooden casks for three to thirty months to develop their characteristic flavors.

## Types of miso:

Variables like the type of *koji*, the ratio of soybeans to *koji*, salt content, and length of fermentation lead to innumerable varieties of miso ranging in color from pale golden yellow to rich chocolate brown. For flavor-pairing purposes, think of miso in terms of two broad categories: Light miso—typically called white, yellow, or sweet miso—and dark miso—red, brown, barley, and soybean miso.

Generally, the lighter the miso, the sweeter and more delicate its flavor. Light miso is good in salads and dressings, and with lighter foods like fish, chicken, and vegetables (see p. 46 for a broccoli with miso recipe).

Dark miso, which is fermented longer, will be saltier and “meatier.” Its rich, robust flavor is good for adding depth to soups and sauces. Try it with root vegetables, beans, or winter squash.

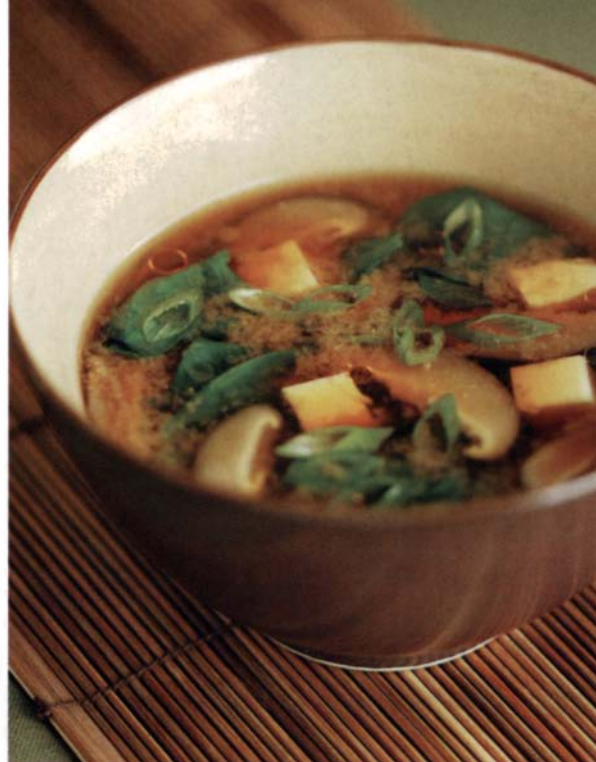
## Cooking with miso:

Always add miso toward the end of cooking and never boil it, as high heat will destroy both its flavor and nutrients. For the smoothest sauces and soups, whisk miso into an equal amount of slightly warm broth until smooth, and then gradually stir the thinned miso back into the pot. Use about 1 to 1½ tablespoons of miso for every cup of liquid. Miso is a good substitute for salt or soy sauce or in place of anchovy paste for vegetarian recipes. Just remember, miso is quite concentrated in flavor, so a little goes a long way.

## Buying and storing miso:

Look for miso in plastic tubs or bags in the refrigerated section of Asian markets or health-food stores. For a mail-order source, see p. 79. Miso keeps for up to a year if sealed well and refrigerated.

—Thy Tran, co-author  
of *The Williams-Sonoma  
Kitchen Companion*



## Miso Mushroom Soup

*Serves two; may be doubled.*

You can make miso soup with any type of miso, but we prefer darker types for their richer, more savory flavor.

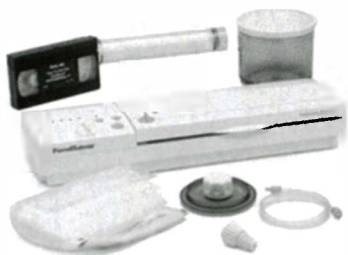
- 2 dried shiitake mushrooms, rinsed**
- ½ cup baby spinach leaves**
- ½ cup medium diced silken tofu**
- 2½ tablespoons miso (preferably red or brown)**
- 2 tablespoons thinly sliced scallion greens**
- ½ teaspoon toasted sesame oil**

In a medium saucepan, combine the mushrooms with 3 cups cold water. Bring to a boil over medium heat. Remove from the heat and use a fork or tongs to transfer the mushrooms to a cutting board. As soon as the mushrooms are cool enough to handle, trim off and discard the stems and slice the caps very thinly. Return the sliced mushrooms to the pan of water. Bring back to a simmer and then reduce the heat to low. Let the mushrooms steep for 15 minutes (the water needn't be simmering, but it's fine if it does). Taste one of the mushroom slices. If you like the texture, leave the mushrooms in; otherwise, fish them out and discard them.

Bring the mushroom broth to a simmer over medium heat. Add the spinach and tofu and simmer for 1 minute. Remove from the heat. In a small bowl, combine the miso with 2 tablespoons of the broth and mix well. Stir the thinned miso into the soup. Sprinkle each serving with 1 tablespoon of the scallion greens and ¼ teaspoon of the sesame oil. —J. A.

*The lighter the miso's color, the more delicate its flavor.*

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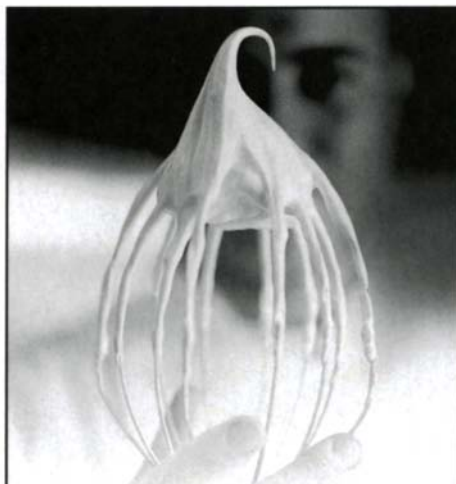
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knife skills

# How to carve roast chicken

There's more than one way to carve a roast chicken, but this technique is one of our favorites because it gives you boneless breast meat that you can slice across the grain, if you like.

## First the legs



**1.** Forcefully bend a leg away from the body until the joint pops apart. Use a sharp boning knife to sever the leg from the body, cutting through the separated joint.



**2.** As you separate the leg, be sure to get the "oyster," a tasty nugget of meat toward the back of the chicken just above the thigh. Use the tip of the knife to scrape it free from its indentation in the body.



**3.** Separate the drumstick from the thigh by cutting through the joint with a chef's knife. It should be fairly easy to cut through the joint. If the knife meets resistance, reposition the blade slightly and try again.

**4.** Begin separating one side of the breast from the body by cutting along the breastbone with the tip of your boning knife. Work from the tail end of the bird toward the wing end. When you hit the wishbone, angle the knife and cut down along the wishbone toward the wing. Then make a cut between the breast and the wing.

**5.** Finish separating the breast by simultaneously pulling back on the meat and using little flicks of the knife tip to cut the meat away from the body. Finally, cut through the last of the skin holding the breast onto the body. If you want smaller pieces, set the breast on the cutting board and, holding the knife at a 45-degree angle, slice it crosswise, either in half or into thin slices.

**6.** Trim off the wingtips with a chef's knife and then cut the wing pieces from the body.

## And then the breast



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## Like corn? Give hominy a try

If you've never encountered hominy before, you might be hard-pressed to identify it as corn just by its looks, but one taste of its full toasty corn flavor and you'd probably figure it out quickly. Hominy (also known as posole or pozole) is corn kernels that have been stripped of their hulls and germ. The stripping is done either

mechanically or by soaking in a weak lye solution.

Hominy is yellow or white (shown mixed at left) depending on the type of corn from which it's made, and it's available dried and canned. Dried hominy is sold whole, very coarsely ground to make *samp*, more finely ground to make *grits* (which can be finely, medium, or

coarsely ground), or ground into a semifine meal to make *masa*, from which corn tortillas are made.

Think of canned hominy as you would think of canned beans: Good for adding to soups, stews, salads, and some sauces like the one on p. 43. Drain and rinse canned hominy before using.

—J. A.

## What is soy sauce?

Soy sauce is a broad term for several subtly different concoctions. To find out what's what, take a quick glance at the ingredient list on the label:

- ❖ If the ingredient list says soybeans, wheat, water, and salt, you're probably getting a naturally brewed soy sauce (a.k.a. *shoyu*) that's been aged for six months or longer in steel or plastic tanks or traditional wooden vats. Good stuff. Reduced-sodium versions of these are brewed in the traditional manner, and after fermentation, a dialysis process removes some salt but not the good flavor.
- ❖ If there's caramel color, hydrolyzed soy or vegetable protein, and corn syrup on the ingredient list, chances are you're looking at a synthetic, or non-brewed, soy sauce.
- ❖ If the label lists soybeans, water, and salt—but not wheat—what you have is *tamari*, a richly flavored traditional variation of soy sauce.

—Kimberly Y. Masibay,  
associate editor

## Pure chile powders add intense flavor to sauces and stews

When you see a spice jar labeled simply “chili powder,” it's actually a mix of ground chiles with several spices like oregano, garlic powder, and cumin. Blending ground chiles with these spices gives chili powder a balanced flavor and a measure of convenience—it's easier to simply stir chili powder into a dish rather than open up six or seven spice jars.

But when you're looking to add a more nuanced hit of flavor and heat to a soup,

stew, or sauce, pure chile powders—ones ground solely from a specific type of chile—are just the thing. You may even already have one in your spice rack: Cayenne is a pure chile powder. The chart below describes several pure chile powders that you might like to try, including the two that are used in the chili recipe on p. 37. You can find many of these chile powders in the spice section at your local market, or see p. 78 for sources.

—Tony Rosenfeld, contributing editor

### CHILE POWDER PROFILES

Pasilla	Ancho	New Mexico	Chipotle	Cayenne
<b>Heat level:</b> moderate	<b>Heat level:</b> moderate	<b>Heat level:</b> moderate	<b>Heat level:</b> hot	<b>Heat level:</b> very hot
<b>Flavor:</b> sweet, berry-like	<b>Flavor:</b> fruity, sweet	<b>Flavor:</b> earthy, fruity	<b>Flavor:</b> smoky, sweet	<b>Flavor:</b> intense, sharp
<b>Use in:</b> mole sauce chili braised pork beef stews	<b>Use in:</b> black beans mole sauce spice rubs for grilled pork or shrimp	<b>Use in:</b> enchiladas sauces ground beef taco filling	<b>Use in:</b> barbecue sauce grilling spice rubs mayonnaise	<b>Use in:</b> dips soups crab cakes roasted potato wedges

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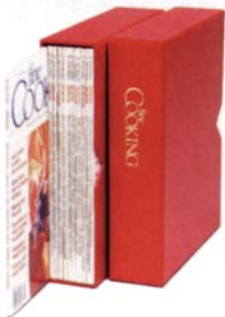
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# Soy sauce

**S**oy sauce is an ancient seasoning that's an important ingredient in the modern pantry. We sprinkle it into everything from soups to marinades to dipping sauces, so we decided to hold a blind tasting of widely available brands to find out which one is best to use. Understanding that good soy sauce should deliver more than just saltiness, our panelists tasted each product straight and with rice, judging their consistency, aroma, flavor, and overall appeal. Of the six we tried, one stood out as a cut above the rest. The others came out relatively on par, so we've listed them alphabetically with flavor descriptions to help you decide which ones you want to try. (For more on soy sauce, see p. 72.)

—K. Y. M.



Top  
Pick

**KIKKOMAN**

\$1.89 for 10 ounces

This smooth, naturally brewed soy sauce delivers balanced salty and rich roasty flavors. Kikkoman doesn't taste overwhelmingly salty, which makes it easier for the tongue to detect nuances of coffee and bright, zippy citrus. Use it in any recipe calling for soy sauce.

## The rest *In alphabetical order; prices will vary.*



**EDEN ORGANIC SHOYU**

\$6.89 for 20 ounces

Its aroma hints of raisins and bourbon. Its flavor is extremely salty, with underlying notes of sweet caramelized onion and roasted beef. Would be a fine seasoning for soup, but we'd use it sparingly in dipping sauces.



**EDEN SELECTED SHOYU**

\$5.49 for 20 ounces

This traditionally brewed product has a sweet, fruity aroma with notes of wood. This is a powerfully salty brew—a little goes a long, long way—but its flavor is rich and intense, with a roasty, earthy, minerally underlayer.



**LA CHOY**

\$1.59 for 10 ounces

This nonbrewed soy sauce is the one we all grew up with. It's very salty with a harsh, smoky edge and a flavor that brings to mind bouillon cubes and burnt coffee.



**SAN-J ORGANIC SHOYU**

\$3.29 for 10 ounces

This has a briny, highly fermented aroma. Its flavor is sweetly savory, salty, and meaty, with a pleasant tanginess to balance things out. Its subdued personality makes this naturally brewed soy sauce a safe bet for most uses.



**YAMASA**

\$1.99 for 5 ounces

This naturally brewed sauce isn't very assertive or nuanced, but it does have an appealing tangy zip. There's a hint of vegetal sweetness and burnt-coffee bitterness, but, overall, the flavor is pretty washed out.

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Woodbridge Winery	27	<a href="http://www.woodbridgewines.com">www.woodbridgewines.com</a>	p. 2

# The right potato for every recipe

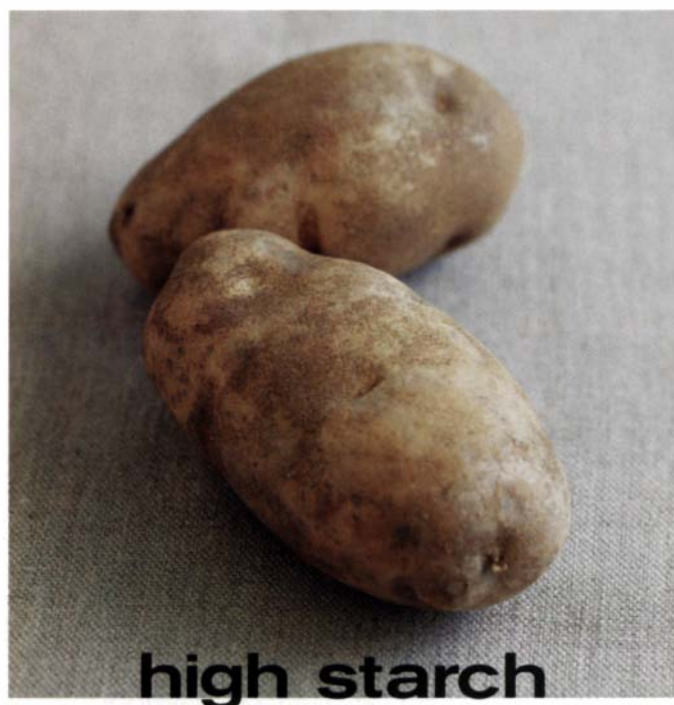
BY ANNE GARDINER & SUE WILSON

**P**otatoes appear at the table in so many different, delicious guises: mashed, baked, sautéed, boiled. And as a cook, you probably know that for each of these dishes, some kinds of potatoes work better than others: russets are great for mashing and baking; round whites for sautéing; little red potatoes for boiling whole. But why is this so?

To answer that question, let's take a closer look at what happens to a potato—any potato—during cooking. Unlike most vegetables, which lose water during cooking as their cell walls soften and release moisture, potatoes actually absorb water. Raw potatoes contain lots of microscopic starch granules, and as the starches soften in the heat of cooking, they sponge up surrounding moisture. The amount of moisture absorbed influences the cooked potato's texture and shape. Thus, starch content is a key to determining a potato's best use.

## A matching game: varieties and uses

At the supermarket, you'll find potatoes in all sorts of shapes, colors, and sizes. In addition to these obvious differences, potatoes also vary in starch content. In recipes, high-starch potatoes are sometimes referred to as "mealy" potatoes, and low-starch potatoes are often termed "waxy." It would be a great help to cooks if supermarkets labeled potatoes as high-, medium-, or low-starch varieties. Unfortunately, not many stores do, so here's the lowdown.



## For baking & mashing

Potatoes such as russets, Idahoes, and Russet Burbanks are high in starch and lower in moisture. They have thick skins, so they bake to perfection and make the fluffiest mashed potatoes. As they cook, their cells tend to separate and absorb lots of moisture, which creates their characteristic mealy, fluffy texture. When you eat these potatoes, you can sense their abundance of starch, as they feel granular and dry on your tongue.

The moisture-absorbing quality of high-starch potatoes also makes them good thickeners in soups. As chunks of high-starch potatoes cook in a soup, the potato falls apart, releasing starch granules into the broth, where they sop up liquid and thicken the soup. But that same quality prevents these potatoes from holding together during cooking, so they're not ideal for any dish where you want the potato to hold its shape: scal-



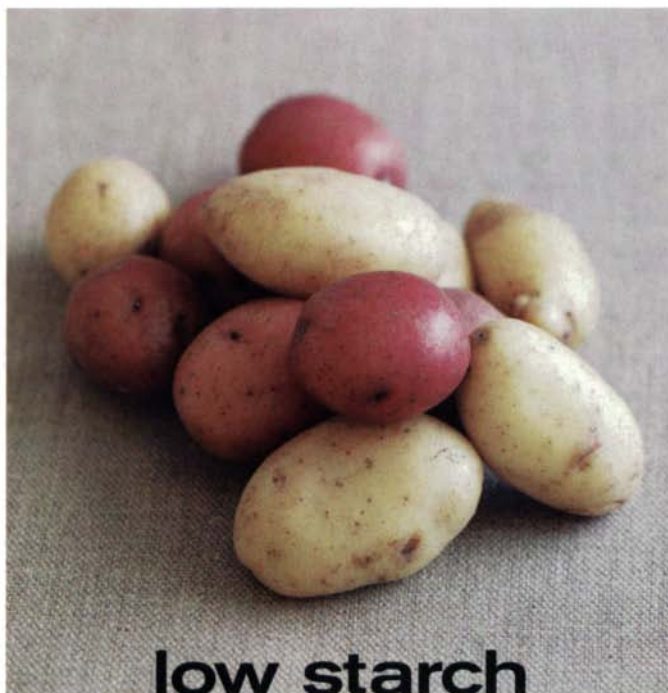
loped potatoes, whole roasted, or hash browns.

**High starch: the secret to perfect french fries.** High-starch potatoes are your best bet for frying. Picture a freshly cut fry as it hits hot fat. Starch granules on the outside immediately swell in the heat and start pulling moisture from the interior of the potato. As the outside cooks and browns, the surface seals, preventing the french fry from absorbing lots of cooking fat. And what you get is a french fry with a crisp and golden exterior and a dry, fluffy interior.



**medium starch**

**Multi-purpose.** Yukon Golds, with their slightly nutty flavor, and Yellow Finns, with their golden skin and flesh, have less starch and a creamier texture than high-starch potatoes. You can mash medium-starch potatoes if you like (and a lot of people do), but expect the result to be creamy rather than light and fluffy. Some cooks also prefer the in-between starch content of these potatoes for pan-fried potatoes and potato salads.



**low starch**

**For salads, gratins, and roasting.** Red-skinned potatoes and round whites, are considered “waxy.” When you slice into one of these high-moisture, low-starch potatoes, the flesh looks translucent and firm.

The cells of low-starch potatoes adhere to one another and swell little during cooking, so these potatoes hold their shape and don’t fall apart easily when handled. And they contain more sugar, which turns deliciously brown during cooking. These qualities make them suited equally well for boiling, roasting, or sautéing, as the recipes in “Red Potatoes, Five Ways” on pp. 51-53 suggest. The flesh contains less starch and more sugar so it remains moist and toothsome even while the outside becomes crisp and brown.



We love little waxy potatoes boiled and served whole with butter and parsley. Waxy potatoes are also ideal for scalloped potatoes because their slices retain a pretty shape and appealing texture during cooking, instead of disintegrating into the surrounding sauce. Because of their low starch content, these varieties only lightly absorb salad dressing, so use them if you like a potato salad that’s chunky, rather than creamy.

**Q: Why shouldn’t I refrigerate raw potatoes?**

**A:** Potatoes should be stored in a dark, cool (45° to 50°F), dry place. If the temperature is too cold, some of the potatoes’ starches will turn into sugars. Not only does this taste unpleasant, but the extra sugars also lead to overbrowning during cooking. If a potato winds up in cold storage, you can convert the sugars back to starches by storing it at room temperature for a few days.

*Anne Gardiner and Sue Wilson are the authors of The Inquisitive Cook. ♦*

where to buy it

#### FROM THE BACK COVER

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#### Perfecting Roast Chicken, p. 40

Try Pam Anderson's chicken-roasting method in Sur La Table's 13½x9½-inch roasting pan, which sells for \$99 ([Surlatable.com](http://Surlatable.com); 800-243-0852). Another good option is Chicago Metallic's 9x13-inch roasting pan; it's \$19.99 at [Cooking.com](http://Cooking.com) (800-663-8810). For cradling the chicken breast side down, we recommend using a V-shaped rack: Try Farberware's Classic Series roasting rack, available in supermarkets.

#### Maple Syrup, p. 48

Grade B maple syrup is available at Whole Foods markets and Trader Joe's, but it's also widely available online. Try [Vermontmapleoutlet.com](http://Vermontmapleoutlet.com), (800-858-3121), which carries maple syrup and other specialty maple products. If you'd like to taste the differences between maple syrup grades, [Chefshop.com](http://Chefshop.com) (877-337-2491) carries a four-grade sampler pack of Vermont maple syrup for \$24.99.

For making the maple butter, try a Taylor candy and deep-fry thermometer; it's \$18.99 at [Sweet Celebrations \(sweetc.com; 800-328-6722\)](http://Sweet Celebrations (sweetc.com; 800-328-6722)).

#### Chili & Cornbread, p. 34

If you can't find pure chile powders locally (look for McCormick chipotle and ancho powders in the grocery store), try ordering them. [ACooksWares.com](http://ACooksWares.com) (800-915-9788; [www.cookswares.com](http://www.cookswares.com)) carries Vann's brand chile powders; 2.2 ounces of chipotle powder is \$5.70, and 2 ounces of New Mexico is \$4.50. The site also offers pasilla and habanero chile powders. Knob Creek, a small-batch bourbon, is available at liquor stores nationwide. For more information, visit [knobcreek.com](http://knobcreek.com).



#### Roasted Vegetable Combinations, p. 44

You can find white miso (which actually has a yellow hue) and sambal oelek (Asian chile paste) in Asian markets, or order them from [Oriental Pantry \(www.orientalpantry.com; 978-264-4576\)](http://OrientalPantry.com), where a 1.1-pound bag of white miso is \$4.09 and an 18-ounce jar of sambal oelek is \$3.29.



## Adding Spice to Your Cooking, p. 56

Floyd Cardoz recommends brass mortar and pestle sets because they don't absorb odors. You'll find them at Kalustyans.com (800-352-

3451), where they range from \$14.99 to \$37.99.

If you're buying an electric spice grinder, note that you don't need anything fancy; simple electric coffee grinders will do the job, and they're available in many housewares stores. If you want to mail-order one, Amazon.com carries a selection starting at \$10.99.

Many whole spices are available in grocery and specialty stores, or you can order them online. For an excellent selection of whole spices, visit Sultan's Delight ([www.sultansdelight.com](http://www.sultansdelight.com); 800-852-5046) or check out Penzeys Spices ([penzeys.com](http://penzeys.com); 800-741-7787) or Coastalgoods ([coastalgoods.com](http://coastalgoods.com); 508-375-1050).



## Spinach Salad, p. 54

For seasoning the tomatoes in her spinach salad, Elizabeth Karmel recommends minced dried garlic or granulated garlic (not regular garlic powder). Both are available in some supermarkets, but Elizabeth also likes the granulated garlic from TheSpicehouse.com; a 1/2-cup shaker jar is \$2.98.

## From Our Test Kitchen,

p. 66

For sources for chile powders, see the listings under Chili & Cornbread at left. For miso sources, see the listing under Roasted Vegetable Combinations at left.

For pasteurized eggs in shells, visit Safeeggs.com; five dozen eggs (the minimum quantity) is \$13.95.

## Pudding Cakes, p. 62

You'll find 6-ounce Pyrex custard cups in most supermarkets. To order by mail, try Linens n' Things ([www.lnt.com](http://www.lnt.com); 866-568-7378), where a set of four 6-ounce cups is \$3.99.



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# nutritioninformation

Recipe	Page	Calories		Protein	Carb	Fats (g)				Chol.	Sodium	Fiber	Notes
		total	from fat	(g)	(g)	total	sat	mono	poly	(mg)	(mg)	(g)	
<b>Letters</b>	10												
Tortellini in Broth with Roasted Vegetables		670	300	25	69	34	9	20	3	50	2960	7	
<b>In Season</b>	24												
Roasted Carrot Soup		140	70	4	15	8	3	4	1	10	720	4	
<b>Texas Chili Menu</b>	34												
Cornbread with Scallions & Bacon		260	110	6	33	12	2	3	6	30	510	2	
Texas Beef Chili with Poblanos & Beer		590	260	58	20	29	11	13	2	175	900	6	
Ruby Salad w/ Crumbled Feta & Spicy Pepitas		300	220	9	13	25	5	10	10	10	800	5	
Mexican-Style Pecan-Chocolate Squares		430	260	4	43	30	11	11	5	40	160	3	per piece, based on 16 servings
<b>Roast Chicken</b>	40												
Roast Chicken		730	390	77	2	43	11	19	9	250	1640	0	
Lemon Artichoke Sauce w/ Garlic & Parsley		45	15	2	5	1.5	0	1.0	0	0	360	0	per ¼ cup
Tomato-Jalapeno Sauce w/ Hominy, Cilantro & Lime		50	20	2	8	2.0	0	1.5	0	0	410	1	per ¼ cup
Apricot & Prune Sauce with Moroccan Spices		110	35	2	18	4.0	0.5	2.5	0.5	0	280	2	per ¼ cup
<b>Roasted Vegetables</b>	44												
Garlic-Roasted Green Beans & Shallots with Hazelnuts		230	140	5	22	15	2	11	2	0	480	5	
Spicy Asian Roasted Broccoli & Snap Peas		290	180	7	24	20	3	11	5	0	800	6	
Roasted Carrots & Parsnips w/ Shallot-Herb Butter		470	270	4	50	30	12	15	2	40	1050	12	based on 3 servings
Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Potatoes & Bacon		340	180	8	33	20	6	10	2	25	810	4	
<b>Maple Syrup</b>	48												
Pork Chops with Maple-Ginger Pan Sauce		510	270	27	23	30	10	16	2	90	650	1	using 2-oz. pork chops
Maple Butter		90	50	0	10	6	4	2	0	15	15	0	per 1 tablespoon
<b>Red Potatoes</b>	51												
Smashed Red Potatoes with Basil & Parmesan		380	180	13	37	20	5	12	2	15	620	4	
Pan-Fried Red Potatoes with Pancetta & Rosemary		220	120	5	19	14	3	8	1	15	650	2	
Gratinéed Red Potatoes with Chives		230	130	8	18	14	3	9	1	10	490	2	
Red Potato Slices Roasted with Lemon & Olives		205	90	3	27	10	1.5	7	1.5	0	620	3	with olives
Red Potatoes Roasted with Onions, Thyme & Sherry Vinegar		180	60	3	27	7	1	5	1	0	250	3	
<b>Spinach Salad</b>	54												
Spinach & Basil Salad		750	550	15	44	61	8	22	29	10	1140	8	
<b>Spice Up Your Cooking</b>	56												
Peppery Pink Lentil Soup		140	35	8	20	4.0	0.5	2.0	1.0	<5	500	5	based on 10 servings
Creamy Mashed Potatoes with Warm Spices		200	60	5	30	7	3	2	1	15	870	2	based on 8 servings
Six-Spice Braised Short Ribs		430	210	33	19	24	7	11	3	80	2110	2	based on 8 servings
<b>Pudding Cakes</b>	62												
Lemon Pudding Cakes		220	80	4	31	9	5	3	1	100	150	0	without whipped cream
Butter-Rum Pudding Cakes		230	80	4	29	10	5	3	1	100	160	0	without whipped cream
Mocha Pudding Cakes		200	80	4	29	9	5	3	1	95	140	1	without whipped cream
<b>Test Kitchen</b>	66												
Caesar Dressing		150	140	2	1	16	2	11	2	55	440	0	per 2 tablespoons
Miso Mushroom Soup		110	35	7	11	4.0	0.5	1.0	2.0	0	820	2	
<b>Quick &amp; Delicious</b>	82c												
Pork Tenderloin with Apples		650	340	47	21	38	20	13	2	205	580	2	
Seared Tuna with Citrus, Tomato & Olive Sauce		490	260	42	17	29	5	18	4	65	790	6	
Duck Breast & Orange Salad		510	310	32	20	34	5	19	8	165	580	4	using 4-oz. breast halves
Seared Flank Steak with Shallot-Mustard Sauce		450	270	35	3	31	15	9	3	110	650	0	
Chicken with Mustard-Fennel Crust		440	270	32	7	30	7	16	5	115	750	1	using thighs (4 oz. w/ bone)
Lemony Sole w/ Capers & Croutons in Brown Butter Sauce		540	370	22	23	41	18	10	10	120	900	2	
Sautéed Lamb Chops with Herbes de Provence		460	370	20	2	41	12	23	4	85	540	1	about 3 oz. per serving

The nutritional analyses have been calculated by a registered dietitian at The Food Consulting Company of Del Mar, California. When a recipe gives a choice of ingredients, the first choice is the one used in the

calculations. Optional ingredients and those listed without a specific quantity are not included. When a range of ingredient amounts or servings is given, the smaller amount or portion is used. When the

quantity of salt and pepper aren't specified, the analysis is based on ¼ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for entrées, and ⅛ teaspoon salt and ⅛ teaspoon pepper per serving for side dishes.

# Today's The day

I was the chauffeur all morning  
and the maid all afternoon.  
The chef will be taking the night off.

HORMEL® Fully Cooked Entrees.  
*Tastes Like It Took All Day.®*



Today's flavor  
**Hormel**



# Ultimate flavor from Extraordinary Oranges

The Wilson family had often dreamed of becoming independent of the big orange cooperative for which they had been longtime growers in Riverside, California. Brothers Tom, John, and Andy all returned home after grad school to help their dad pursue that dream, and extraordinary oranges were the result. T. H. Wilson Washington navels are fragrant, flavorful, and very sweet; the sugar content in their juice can register an

amazing 18 brix or more (store-bought juice usually registers about 12 brix).

The Wilsons don't just grow the fruits, they pack them, too, and market their oranges to small grocers up and down the West Coast, exporting to Japan and Hong Kong as well.

"Dad taught us to stay out of nature's way to get ultimate orange flavor," says Tom. The Wilsons use no pesticides and rely on weeds to encourage beneficial insects. Some of the most complex-tasting fruits come from trees planted nearly a century ago. "You can't tell by looking," says Andy as he tastes an orange, "but the gnarliest old tree produces the sweetest fruit of all."

—Amy Albert, senior editor



1. The look of perfection in these Washington navel oranges includes their thin skin, small center, and complete lack of dry, pulpy flesh, called "rag." 2. Andy Wilson takes care to cut at the stem—rather than pulling at the orange—when picking, which gives the fruit a longer shelf life. 3. A 60-year-old stamping machine, which the Wilsons rebuilt from old parts, marks all the oranges with the family's name: T. H. Wilson. 4. John Wilson packs oranges by hand with equipment he and his brothers built from reclaimed machinery.

BY ARLENE JACOBS

## French bistro-style cooking

makes an easy transition from restaurant to home kitchen—with a few shortcuts. For example, while traditional French cuisine often relies heavily on long-cooking stocks, you can save time by replacing them with low-salt canned broth. And while traditional French sauces are usually strained, I skip that step here to keep the cooking time to a minimum. For great flavor, these recipes all use simple ingredients like fresh butter, shallots, fresh herbs, garlic, and wine, which are staples of French cuisine and readily available in local markets.

### Note:

Some of these recipes call for citrus segments, which are easy to make. Just slice the ends off the fruit with a small, sharp knife. Stand the fruit on one of its cut ends and slice off the skin in strips (try to get all the bitter white pith). Working over a bowl, cut the segments free from the membrane, letting each segment fall into the bowl as you go. Remove any seeds from the segments.



## Seared Flank Steak with Shallot-Mustard Sauce

*Serves four.*

**1 flank steak, about 1½ lb.**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**1 Tbs. corn oil**  
**6 Tbs. cold unsalted butter (4 Tbs. cut into ½-inch cubes)**  
**3 Tbs. finely minced shallot**  
**3 medium cloves garlic, minced**  
**½ cup dry red wine**  
**¾ cup low-salt beef broth**  
**1 tsp. chopped fresh thyme**  
**1 tsp. Dijon mustard**  
**1 Tbs. chopped fresh tarragon**

Set a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F. Season the steak generously with salt and pepper. Heat an ovenproof 12-inch sauté pan over high heat until very hot. Add the oil to coat the pan and sear the steak on one side until well browned, about 1½ minutes. Flip with tongs and cook until the second side is well browned, about another 2 minutes. Put the pan in the oven and roast until the steak is cooked to your liking, 5 to 7 minutes for medium rare. Transfer the steak to a cutting board

and let rest, lightly covered with foil, while you make the sauce.

Set the same skillet over medium heat and add 2 Tbs. of the butter. When the butter melts, add the shallot and garlic and cook until soft and translucent but not browned, about 2 minutes. Add the wine, increase the heat to medium high, and boil until syrupy, 2 to 4 minutes. Add the broth and thyme and boil until about ⅓ cup of liquid remains, 6 to 8 minutes. Reduce the heat to low and whisk in the mustard. (Don't let the sauce boil after the mustard is added.) Stir in the 4 Tbs. butter cubes, a few at a time. Stir in half the tarragon and season the sauce to taste with salt and pepper.

With a sharp knife, slice the steak thinly across the grain on the diagonal, drizzle with the sauce, and sprinkle with remaining tarragon.

**Serving suggestion:**  
**Serve with oven-roasted potatoes and an arugula salad.**



## Seared Tuna with Citrus, Tomato & Olive Sauce

*Serves four.*

**2 medium plum tomatoes**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**1 medium lemon**  
**2 medium navel oranges**  
**2 Tbs. coriander seeds**  
**1 Tbs. black peppercorns**  
**4 tuna steaks, 1 inch thick (6 to 7 oz. each)**  
**5 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**2 anchovy fillets, rinsed and patted dry**  
**1 large clove garlic, minced**  
**½ cup (about 18) pitted Kalamata olives**

Cut each tomato into four wedges, cut out the cores, and remove the seeds and pulp. Slice the tomatoes lengthwise into ¼-inch strips. In a colander, toss them with ¼ tsp. salt and let them drain for 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, finely grate the zest of the lemon. Put the zest in a medium bowl. Working over the bowl, segment the lemon and the oranges (see the note at left). In a spice grinder or mortar and pestle (or with a meat mallet; put the spices in a zip-top bag), coarsely grind the coriander and peppercorns. Press the spices into both sides of the tuna steaks.

Gently heat 3 Tbs. of the oil in a 12-inch skillet

over medium heat. Add the anchovies and mash them into the oil with the back of a spoon until nearly dissolved. Turn the heat to low, add the garlic, and cook until softened but not browned, 3 to 4 minutes. Remove from the heat. Add the drained tomato strips, the orange and lemon segments (with the zest and juice), and the olives to the pan. Toss very gently to warm through, being careful not to break up the citrus segments. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Transfer to a serving bowl and keep warm.

Wipe out the skillet, set it over medium-high heat, and pour in the remaining 2 Tbs. oil. Generously salt the tuna steaks on both sides. Working in batches if necessary, sear the steaks, pressing on them while cooking to help a crust develop, until golden brown, 2 to 3 minutes. Flip the tuna and continue to cook until golden brown, another 2 to 3 minutes for medium rare to medium. Transfer the tuna to dinner plates and serve with the warm citrus sauce.

### **Serving suggestion:**

**Serve with couscous and sautéed zucchini.**



## Duck Breast & Orange Salad

*Serves four.*

**2 navel oranges**  
**2 Tbs. granulated sugar**  
**3 Tbs. white-wine vinegar**  
**1 Tbs. fresh lemon juice**  
**1 tsp. finely grated lemon zest**  
**3 Tbs. minced shallot**  
**6 Tbs. canola oil**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**2 whole boneless, skin-on duck breasts (4 halves)**  
**1 medium head frisée, washed, dried, and torn into bite-size pieces (about 3 cups)**  
**1 large or 2 small heads Bibb lettuce, washed, dried, and torn into bite-size pieces (about 4 cups)**  
**2 Tbs. sliced fresh chives (¼-inch pieces)**

Finely grate one of the oranges to get 1 tsp. zest; set aside. Working over a medium bowl, segment both oranges (see the note at left).

Put the sugar and vinegar in a small saucepan over medium-high heat and boil until the sugar is completely melted, the bubbles become large and thick, and the mixture turns golden brown, 3 to 5 minutes. Take the pan off the heat and stir in the orange zest, lemon juice, and lemon zest. Let cool slightly. Add the shallot and gradually whisk in the oil; season with salt and pepper.

Rinse the duck and pat dry. Separate the breasts into halves, if necessary. Trim any silverskin from the meat side. With a sharp knife, score the skin in a crosshatch pattern. Trim any excess skin, leaving a ¼-inch overhang. Season well with salt and pepper on the flesh side and very lightly on the skin side.

Heat a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat for 1 minute. Put the duck in the pan, skin side down, and let it sear. As fat collects in the pan, spoon it off. When the skin turns medium brown (6 to 8 minutes), reduce the heat to medium and continue to cook until much of the fat has rendered and the skin is golden brown, 2 to 4 minutes. Flip the breasts and cook briefly on the flesh side, 2 to 3 minutes for medium rare (or 3 to 4 minutes for medium). Transfer to a cutting board and cover loosely with foil.

Meanwhile, toss the frisée and Bibb lettuce with enough of the vinaigrette to lightly coat. Slice the duck crosswise on a slight diagonal into ¼-inch slices. Mound the greens on each plate and arrange the duck slices and orange segments all around. Drizzle each salad with a little more of the vinaigrette and garnish with the chives.



## Pork Tenderloin with Apples

*Serves four.*

**2 medium Granny Smith apples**  
**½ medium lemon**  
**7 Tbs. unsalted butter**  
**1 Tbs. granulated sugar**  
**2 pork tenderloins (about 1 lb. each), trimmed and cut in half crosswise**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**1 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**2 large shallots, finely minced**  
**¼ cup Calvados or Cognac**  
**¼ cup apple cider**  
**½ tsp. fresh thyme leaves**  
**⅓ cup heavy cream**

Set a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F. Peel, core, and cut each apple into eight wedges, rubbing the cut edges with the cut side of the lemon half as you go, and then juice the lemon half into a small bowl and set aside. In a 10-inch skillet, melt 2 Tbs. of the butter with the sugar over medium-high heat. Add the apple wedges and cook, turning halfway, until soft and a rich amber color, about 8 minutes (reduce the heat to medium if they start to burn). Set aside and keep warm.

Pat the tenderloins dry with paper towels and season generously with salt and pepper. Heat the oil in a 12-inch ovenproof skillet

(don't use nonstick) over medium-high heat until very hot. Sear the pork on all sides until nicely browned, about 5 minutes total. Put the skillet in the oven and roast until an instant-read thermometer inserted in the center of the pork registers 140° to 145°F, 10 to 15 minutes. Transfer to a warm plate (don't clean the skillet), tent with foil, and let rest for 10 minutes.

Set the skillet over medium heat and add 2 Tbs. butter. When it melts, add the shallots and cook until soft and translucent but not browned, about 3 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and add the Calvados. Return the pan to the stove, raise the heat to medium high, and boil until the Calvados is almost gone, 1 to 2 minutes. Add the cider and thyme; simmer until the liquid is reduced by about half, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the cream and cook over very low heat until the sauce is golden and coats the back of a spoon, about 5 minutes. Cut the remaining 3 Tbs. butter into ½-inch cubes and swirl them into the sauce. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and ½ tsp. of the reserved lemon juice or to taste. Slice the pork and serve with the warm apples and sauce.



## Chicken with Mustard-Fennel Crust

*Serves four.*

**8 bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs or drumsticks (or a mix)**  
**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**  
**3 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**  
**1 Tbs. fennel seeds**  
**1 cup coarse fresh breadcrumbs**  
**2 Tbs. Dijon mustard**  
**2 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**

Set a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F. Rinse the chicken parts and pat them dry; season generously with salt and pepper. Heat 1 Tbs. of the oil in a 10-inch sauté pan over medium-high heat until very hot. Working in two batches, brown the chicken well on both sides, 3 to 4 minutes per side. Transfer the chicken, skin side up, to an 11x14-inch or similar roasting pan and bake until cooked through, about 15 minutes.

Meanwhile, over medium heat, toast the fennel seeds in a small dry skillet, stirring frequently, until golden and fragrant, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl and add the remaining 2 Tbs.

olive oil, the breadcrumbs, ½ tsp. salt, and ⅓ tsp. pepper.

Remove the chicken from the oven and raise the oven temperature to 500°F. Turn the chicken pieces over and, with a pastry brush, lightly dab the mustard on top. With your hands, press the breadcrumb mixture on top of the mustard. Bake until the crumb crust turns golden, about another 10 minutes. Transfer the chicken to a serving platter, sprinkle with the parsley, and serve.

### Serving suggestion:

**Serve with roasted tomato halves or other roasted vegetables.**



## Lemony Sole with Capers & Croutons in Brown Butter Sauce

*Serves two.*

- 4½ Tbs. unsalted butter**
- 1 slice white bread, cut into ¼-inch cubes**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**
- 1½ medium lemons**
- 4 sole fillets (2 to 3 oz. each)**
- All-purpose flour for dredging**
- 2 Tbs. corn or canola oil (or vegetable oil)**
- 2 Tbs. capers, rinsed and drained**
- 1 Tbs. chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley**

Heat the oven to 200°F. Melt 1½ Tbs. of the butter in a 10- to 12-inch nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the bread cubes to the pan, stirring and tossing almost constantly with a wooden spoon, until the cubes are golden brown and crisp, 3 to 5 minutes. Drain on paper towels and sprinkle with salt. Wipe out the skillet.

Segment the whole lemon (see the note under the introduction). Cut each segment into four pieces. Transfer to a small bowl and add 1 Tbs. juice squeezed from the lemon half.

Season the sole fillets lightly on each side with salt and pepper and dredge the

fillets in the flour, shaking off any excess. Heat the oil in the nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Working in batches to avoid crowding the pan, cook the fillets until the first side is light golden, about 2 minutes. Using two spatulas to support the delicate fish, flip the fillets and cook until the second side is light golden and the fillets are opaque, another 2 minutes. Transfer to two dinner plates and keep warm in the oven.

Wipe out the skillet with a paper towel and add the remaining 3 Tbs. butter. Over medium-high heat, melt the butter and cook, swirling the pan until the butter turns a medium brown, about 2 minutes. Immediately remove the skillet from the heat and add the lemon segments and lemon juice, the capers, and the parsley; season to taste with salt and pepper. Drizzle the sauce over the fish and sprinkle on the croutons.

### Serving suggestion:

**Serve with herbed rice pilaf.**



## Sautéed Lamb Chops with Herbes de Provence

*Serves four.*

- 5 Tbs. extra-virgin olive oil**
- 2 Tbs. dried herbes de Provence**
- 2 cloves garlic, mashed to a paste**
- 12 lamb rib chops (¾ inch thick)**
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

In a small bowl, combine 4 Tbs. of the oil with the herbes de Provence and the mashed garlic to make a wet paste. Rub the paste all over the lamb chops and set aside at room temperature for 20 minutes.

Generously season both sides of the chops with salt and pepper. Heat the remaining 1 Tbs. oil in a 10-inch sauté pan over high heat until very hot. Sear the chops in batches until browned on

one side, 2 to 3 minutes. Flip the chops and cook until the second side has browned, 2 to 3 minutes for medium rare. Transfer the chops to a platter, cover loosely with foil, and let rest for 5 minutes before serving.

### Serving suggestion:

**Serve with mashed potatoes and haricots verts.**

*Arlene Jacobs is a freelance food writer and a chef-instructor at the French Culinary Institute in New York City. ♦*